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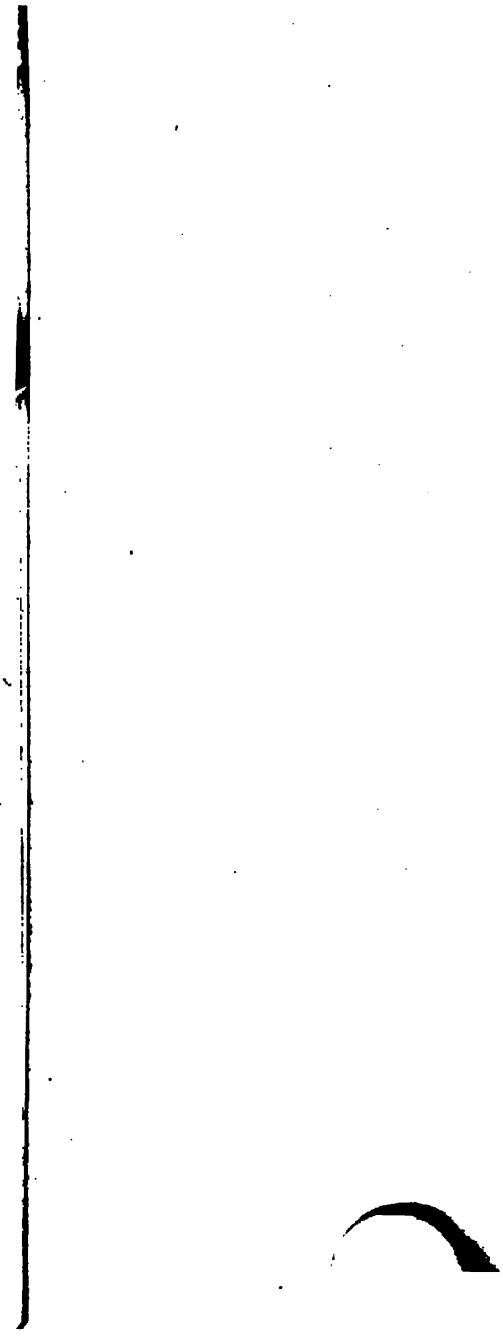

MORTIMER COLLINS:

HIS LETTERS AND FRIENDSHIPS,

WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF HIS LIFE.

EDITED BY

FRANCES COLLINS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL II.

SECOND EDITION.

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MORTIMER COLLINS:

HIS LETTERS AND FRIENDSHIPS, WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF HIS LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

1875.

JANUARY TO MARCH.

From the commencement of 1875 till his death, Mortimer Collins gives us so much of his life and opinions in his articles, that it is possible almost to form a diary from them. Such opinions and expressions better describe his life and character than anything I can say.

He was always so happy in his remarks on birds that I feel justified in quoting him continually on this subject. On January 2nd, 1875, he writes as follows:—

In weather which seems to freeze the brain itself, Arctic weather of the keenest kind, it is not altogether easy to write. I am just now reminded of Keats's most Shakespearian line,

The owl, with all his feathers, was a-cold,

by a pair of owls caged opposite my dining-room window, that just pass all their time (except dinner-time) in the snug box provided for them. The cock turns out at about noon to look at the weather, shakes his sagacious head, returns to inform his spouse that she had better stay where she is. Lucky birds! they get fed regularly, and haven't to write books or articles to pay their bills.

This weather is making the birds eager for every crumb of bread we can spare them. We should feed them now, lest the groves should be songless in summer. My latest visitors have been a pair of ravens, that have come down to my doors in search of food. Vast birds they look in my leafless trees, with their long beaks and bright eyes. I hope no bucolic lout with unlicensed gun will shoot them down. The birds eager for food and weak on the wing, are just now at a terrible disadvantage.

In January "Cavendish," the famous writer on whist, visited the Cottage, and Mortimer Collins writes of this visit in the following way.

I had the pleasure, the other day, of entertaining a famous whist-player. I never learnt so much about cards in so short a time. I am not certain that all this knowledge was not too much for me, as I woke next day with an awful headache, which made me curiously disinclined to do any work. Indeed, I dreamt all night of knaves dressed like fiends, with horns, hoofs, and tails of the most frightful colours and dimensions. He informed me that during the last ten years he has played twenty thousand rubbers at whist, and won about two thousand pounds. Is the game worth the candle? I was surprised to find he was quite ignorant of quadrille, and knew nothing of the Italian tarots.

The subjoined letter is to Mr. S. R. Townshend Mayer, who was at that time Editor of the *St. James's Magazine*.

January 23, 1875.

DEAR TOWNSHEND MAYER,—Your note did not reach me, but its meaning is intelligible from the *Athenæum's* "Literary Gossip." I am at your service, and I shall be glad to hear what you would like to be done.

If you care to connect my name with any of my books, please let it be "The Inn of Strange Meetings." I write novels for money; verse because I like it. I wish I could educate the public into taking delight in a novel in verse—such as the *Odyssey*, *Don Juan*, *Aurora Leigh*. Concerning Dr. Hayman, I am glad to

think he was pleased with what I could do on his behalf. As I had not even heard his name until his appointment to Rugby, it is clear that I was moved by a desire to do justice. I never met with a case which so excited my indignation and contempt: and I am eartily glad the Chief of the Party to which I belong found an early opportunity to make to Dr. Hayman some amends for his persecution by people to whom gentlemanly feeling was a thing unknown.

Faithfully yours,
MORTIMER COLLINS.

He took for many years a great deal of interest in the affairs of his own parish, an interest which was fully appreciated.

He was always much interested also in the question of water supply. I quote a few lines from the "Loiterer" of the 30th of January.

All the lexicographers—Bailey, Johnson, Richardson, Horne Tooke, Hensleigh Wedgwood—derive the word *ague* from the French *aigu*, acute. I don't believe it; it comes from *aqua*, water. The water is out in my vicinage in terrible quantities; the air is chilled with it, and I am aguish. Every bone in my body aches. The ditches are brooks, the commons are lakes; the

village school boys and girls are rushing into the water, splashing each other, moistening their stockings, and laying in a grand stock of rheumatism for consumption when fifteen has developed into fifty. You cannot teach children the unwisdom of these things. How I wish I had been soundly flogged in my youth every time I came home wet through—that's about fifteen dozen days of the thirty dozen or so that make up the year! My cuticle would have suffered, but my bones would have been in better condition than they are now.

At this moment an immense disused chalk-pit not far from my house is filled with water to overflowing. In July next it will be as dry as a bone, and the farmers will be sending miles for water. They won't puddle that huge pit and turn it into a permanent reservoir. It is strange to see how dull farmers can be; and they are the very lords of earth, and do the noblest manual and material work there is to be done. In imitation of Alexander and Diogenes, I say, "If I were not a penman I would be a ploughman."

"O fortunatos nimium, sua si bona norint,
Agricolas! quibus ipsa, procul discordibus armis,
Fundit humo facilem victum justissima tellus."

Why, when the prodigal winter rains fill every pit, natural or artificial, that exists in the neighbourhood, should these "too fortunate farmers" be without a drop of water in the droughts of summer? Simply

because they will not save that water. I have written many letters to the *Times* on this topic, and so have far weightier authorities than I; but the *fortunati agricolæ* are incurable.

Mortimer Collins always wrote very strongly on what is called Spiritualism.

Just at this time he wrote a great deal on the subject. In one place he says,—

The argument of probability in reference to Spiritualism is clear against it. If the soul be immortal, as the Spiritualist admits, it will go on growing elsewhere as it has grown on earth.

The instinctive ambition of man is a prophecy of his future: which among us would like to think of an eternity of just the very work we are doing now? I can imagine Mr. Disraeli glad to get beyond the region of politics; Dr. Colenso rather weary of finding inaccuracies in the Pentateuch; the Poet Laureate anxious to meet a hero other than King Arthur; and, indeed, scores of people that I know would be glad to dismount from their hobbies. But these Spiritualists, when they profess to bring back some gossiping ghost to revisit the glimpses of the gaslight, present us with an imbecile creature who has gone backward instead of forward. Worse than a Bourbon, if Shakespeare or Milton be called to the front, he has learnt

nothing and forgotten everything. An invisible Shakespeare without wisdom or wit, or rhythm or rhyme, painfully hammering out nonsense on a table, is enough to make one dread immortality. Fancy, after escaping into the illimitable ether, and being winged for flights into infinitude, a recall to a dull room in a London house, to be questioned on trifles through a psychic.

These remarks seemed to have caused some comment, and he replied as follows,—

Some cursory remarks of mine on matters spiritualistic have brought me a little correspondence. Before noting it I may observe that there is a tendency to call things by names which convey exactly the opposite meaning. There are among us, for example, scientific gentlemen who style themselves Positivists, but who are actually Negativists, since they deny the existence of any positive power to guide the universe. Similarly the persons who call themselves Spiritualists are really Materialists, their desire being to give substantial form to that impalpable essence which is the spirit of man.

They cannot believe in the soul's immortality unless souls will come back and lift dining-tables and play accordions in the dark. Any sane man would prefer annihilation to an immortality of subjugation to the

will of a medium. It appears to me that Spiritualists ought to form a society, which might be called the Royal Hysterical Society. Any F.R.H.S. of the Spiritualist set could hardly be confounded with the Historicals or the Horticulturals.

Knowl Hill,
February 12, 1875.

DEAR TOWNSHEND MAYER,—I am very grieved to think of you as an invalid: but the light of intellect keeps one alive, and the blindness of Homer and Milton rather intensified than stayed their power. That I have alleviated any pain at any time is to me a delight. I have tried, since my theory of life was formed, to write what is wholesome, and will do the world good. It is not what pays best, but I stick to my point.

Echo Bridge was written one day when my wife and I and one of the loveliest ladies in the world were out together, and the lady in question told us of an echo on the Great Western that she had known from her childhood. We tested it. It whispers miraculously. I wrote the lines to send to her, without any notion of their being printed, but I am glad you like them. I need hardly say that I am also glad you like *Sir Everard.* I wrote it at a heat, without the remotest idea of what I should do with it, and that is always the best work I do. Was it Paget of the *New Examen* who

liked it? I have a great admiration for the way in which he demolished Macaulay.

Your kind and frank way of writing deserves unreserved return: and I assure you that when anything of mine seems worthy of use it shall be forwarded. I am not quite regular in my habits. Both in quantity and quality my days vary. There are times when I write an immense deal easily, right away, as a bird (a carrier pigeon for example) voyages at a minute a mile through air: there are others when my brain's lead and my pen's dead and I can move no faster than a snail.

But if I agree to do certain work, I always do it to the moment: so, if you take any story from me (whereon my wife will write to yours) you may depend on a punctuality never yet broken.

Ah, one thing I forgot almost, my wife is a *jewel.* She is an *amethyst.* You know the virtue of that gem. Your marriage was romantic: mine not less. You shall hear all about it when you come to Knowl Hill, and see our pigeons fly, and smell our roses if we get any.

Yours as a friend,

MORTIMER COLLINS.

The Valentines were written as usual this year and from their general tone it seems that the weather was bad. I fear that these trifles of verse will appear great nonsense to some

people, and yet there is something to admire in them. Mortimer Collins had plenty of real serious hard work to do and he did it well, and yet he could find time to amuse his friends with these elegant trifles. And perhaps after all it is not so easy to throw off such a quantity of light verse as it seems. Almost any man of education could write a valentine in verse, but it might not be so easy to write a dozen in an afternoon, all varied, and suiting various characters. And perhaps there are not many people who would be troubled to do it even if they could.

The first is to Miss L. C.

VALENTINE, 1875.

LOUISA dear, the rain is falling,
One needs a lot of coal and wine,
And poetry is not enthralling,
And who can write a Valentine?
Where are the Poet's frolic fancies
When doleful damp the Fates will send
Yet we'll find nonsense, I and Frances,
For our dear friend.

With you our notions always mingle,
We love you e'en when most severe,
We hope you'll carefully keep single,
Else might we lose you, that seems clear;
And though a marriage is the sequel
Of woman's life, its natural end,
We wonder where to find the equal
Of our dear friend.

No: sweet Louisa's match will never
Be found upon this whirling globe:
She's witty, wise, *but not too clever*,
Depends not upon brilliant robe.
She is a woman—bright, courageous,
Lovely, and willing to descend
Among Bohemian folk outrageous,
And be—Our Friend—

MORTIMER.

The next is to Mrs J. V.

Dear Mrs. V., I hope that we
To quarrel shan't incline,
Because to-day I cannot say
Much in a Valentine.
The weather makes the air a sponge,
Really too damp it is
To give one's foe a rapier lunge,
One's ladylove a kiss.

When summer comes I'll try to write
What suits a lady fair,
When there is music in the night,
And fragrance in the air.

What now I send is poor and yet
You'll greet the halting line,
Which proves and never can forget
That you're my Valentine.

The next is to Miss Clara S.

O Clara!! . . . that is all I can say
On this abominable misty day.
A million laundresses, O lady mine,
Are trying to wash out Saint Valentine.
Is Budbrooke damp, a downright brook of mud?
No matter, we shall see the roses bud.
There is a sun astronomers declare,
Though seldom he emerges through the air.
When he returns and makes the hours divine,
Perhaps you'll answer this brief Valentine.

The next is to Miss M. A. S.

This is Valentine's Eve, dear Annie,
But really the weather is most uncanny,
And a fellow would have a lot to do
To fancy himself in love with you.

For Venus herself isn't nice in a mist,
Nor warm enough to be pleasantly kiss'd;
And so, dear child, you well divine,
I'm not in a mood for a Valentine.

But I love you too well with your sweet soft ways,
To forget you now on the rarest of days,
And I'll send you more in a merrier metre,
When the happy heart of the year grows sweeter.
When the roses blush, and the larks sing high
'Mid sapphire depths of the soft blue sky,
We'll enjoy the glorious golden time,
And Annie shall laugh at a livelier rhyme.

He not only wrote several Valentines to ladies, but also some for his Secretary to gentlemen. One of those in 1875 is perhaps worth quoting as a specimen. It is to a gentleman on the Coal Exchange, who was a frequent visitor at the Cottage.

DEAR CHARLIE,—'Tis Valentine's Day,
And although you're too lazy to write,
I'll take up my pencil to say
A few words of frolic to-night.

You, living in London, and crazy
With business that bothers your soul,
Are getting uncommonly hazy,
For poetry quarrels with coal.

'Tis yours at this moment to ponder
O'er the prices of diamonds black,
You can't see Saint Valentine wander
Through the country's sweet emerald track.
In our garden are crocuses yellow,
And a lovely young laureat thrush,
I'm sorry for you, my dear fellow,
For you must to the Coal Exchange rush.

But I hope, and my hope is sincerer
Than hopes that some people express,
That quickly your way will be clearer,
And the City will bother you less.
And the day that you give us a dinner
At Richmond with capital wine,
I'll say you're a jolly old sinner,
And fit to be my Valentine.

There is another bit of nonsense written by Mortimer Collins for his Secretary this year to his friend and cousin, Henry Frowde, in Paternoster Row, which I think I might quote.

DEAR HARRY,—Just a single line
To tell you I'm your Valentine.

Your learned Row shows ne'er a sign
Of such a buxom Valentine.

The sun has quite refused to shine,
Although it is Saint Valentine.

Old Mortimer, that miscreant mine,
Growls at a damp Saint Valentine.

I wish you had been here to dine
Upon the Eve of Valentine.

You would be better far than wine
To help us through Saint Valentine.

Come down next week, and I'll incline
To keep you as my Valentine.

Where thrush and blackbird sing divine,
Come and accept your Valentine.

In February he again writes of the birds in his garden, in the "Loiterer."

Long ago I wrote some verses, entitled "My Thrush," to a minstrel of the air who brought me divine music in the fairest days of a delicious year. He sang

"All through the sultry hours of June,
From morning blithe to golden noon."

I think his progeny must have increased and multiplied, thanks to my regular fights against the bird-murdering louts who used to haunt my neighbourhood, but whom, by persistently calling for the aid of the police, I have thoroughly discomfited. There are scores of thrushes now singing in the wildest way: as I write there is a young bird (I know he is young, for he has not yet caught the true tune of the mature singer) full within view, high on a lime-tree, putting me out of conceit with what I am writing. How true is the cry of the old balladist:—

"'Tis merry, 'tis merry, in gay greenwood,
When mavis and merle are singing!"

How true, again, that Shakespeare-touch of Browning's:—

"That's the wise thrush, he sings each song twice over,
Lest you should think he never could recapture,
The first fine careless rapture!"

The thrush sang in May, according to the poet's lovely verse; but this year the birds began long before Saint Valentine.

In the same column he breaks out into

verse in his usual way, though still keeping the prose lines.

Fair reader, if there's reader fair who in this scientific air is not too wise and grave and solemn to loiter through the Loiterer's column, he hopes you had a Valentine as joyous as the day was fine. He hopes that somebody there is to send you a poetic kiss, if such a thing one dares to mention: it seems an obsolete invention.

He does this often both in books and articles.

The "poetic kisses," of the present day are generally fine bits of paper and tinsel, or something substantial in the way of a present for practical people. Mortimer's "poetic kisses" no doubt gave as much pleasure as any present.

February 17, 1875.

DEAR TOWNSHEND MAYER,—I have read your pamphlet, which appears to me a just and valuable statement of the case; but I doubt your getting a Parliamentary inquiry, as Disraeli will probably stand on the aphorism, *Quieta non movere*. The conduct of Temple and Scott moves one to indignation that English "gentlemen" can do such things; but perchance,

after all, the affair may make Hayman a bishop. I have not time to say how much I admire his "Homeric Studies."

Yours, in great haste,

MORTIMER COLLINS.

The pamphlet here mentioned was "Extracts from the Minute Book of the Governing Body of Rugby School, with Comments and a Preface" by Mr. Townshend Mayer.

The next lines are to Miss L. C., whom we called our good fairy. She said one day she should like to train some children according to her own ideas.

February 21, 1875.

There is a lady well we know,
  And call her our Good Fairy,
Who's eager to set up an O-
  riental seminary.

How to employ her vigorous life
  She seems in a quandary;
She, who would make a perfect wife,
  Sets up a seminary.

On Clifton Down, by Bristol Town,
  A spot serene and airy,

Louisa thinks she'll settle down,
And start her seminary.

She'll take her children all to church,
And whip them when contrary,
And be like good old Mother Birch
In this new seminary.

I've got for her another scheme,
This plan of life to vary;
Why not make snow-white Devonshire cream
At some delightful dairy?

Go out as milkmaid just at dawn;
Tho' cows may be contrary,
And kick the bucket on the lawn—
'Tis not a seminary.

Roll back your sleeves and milk the kine,
Of labour never chary,
And drink the matin air like wine,
And shun the seminary.

Still there's a better way than this—
To conjugate *amare*—
And let a lover's happy kiss
Be your true seminary.

Advice from
MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

In "Adversaria" of February 27th, Mortimer Collins gives part of an answer he received to his Valentine to Miss M. A. S.

I write Valentines to many ladies—how many matters not. This morning (*die Jovis*) I received from the central county of England an answer to one in which I had pleaded the chilliness of the day as an excuse for the stupidity of my verse. I quote a couple of stanzas to show that there are ladies who can write pleasant and graceful verse:—

"Who for fine weather still doth tarry,
Must often lose both time and tide;
Who will not kiss in February
May find in May a kiss denied.
Far different he, may Fate assign
To be my life-long Valentine!

* * * *

"When dark clouds line the wintry sky,
And from the east the cold winds blow,
And the poor sheep close-huddled lie,
Who's this comes riding o'er the snow?
Unmindful he if foul or fine,
No weather stops my Valentine!"

This charming bit of verse, which shows (I could bring other proofs) that the ladies of to-day can write

pleasant poetry to their friends, was dated—"The Eve of St. Valentine (Old Style)."

I quote the following from the "Loiterer" of March 13th :—

Is the spring at last coming slowly up this way, as Coleridge hath it in the most dainty-mystical of all romances? The bitter east has left us for a while. Will it soon be possible to loiter on lawns and beneath lime-alleys, and listen to blackbird and thrush without fear of rheumatism and diphtheria? Let us hope to echo the charming words of Catullus :—

"Jam ver egelidos refert tepores."

By the way, the Romans evidently took a vernal holiday instead of our autumnal one. The poet proceeds—

"Ad claras Asiæ volemus urbes,
Jam mens prætrepidans avet vagari,
Jam læti studio pedes vigescunt."

I certainly always feel more disposed for wandering in spring than in autumn. After a winter's torpidity and enforced confinement to one's own hearth comes the natural desire to be in some fresh place; and, in good faith, if I had not to loiter on paper to-day, I think I should take a twenty-mile walk. In autumn, after a calm summer, I like to see the melancholy

beauty of decay steal gradually over the woodlands I love best.

The following was written on March 13: the friend alluded to was Walter Thornbury.

Mortimer Collins, as I have before mentioned, was a good chess-player.

An old friend of mine many years ago remarked to me that literary men (of whom he is one) seldom deemed the game of chess worth playing. To this I demur. It is a game which gives a sensitive and active intellect a restful change after study or writing. It is not trivial, and it rests wholly on skill. To play it as a science, with careful memory of all the openings, is of course impossible except to a professional player; but simply as a recreation it is without equal or rival among sedentary games: and as to its being despised by men of letters, there is plentiful evidence to the contrary. Howard Staunton, the greatest of our players, lately deceased, was amongst the subtlest of our Shakespearian scholars; Peacock, humorist and poet, has in one of his choicest novels, "Melincourt," described a "chess dance" with such accuracy and picturesqueness that any reader may see he loved the game. Dr. Pusey is one of our best living players; and when he and the Poet Praed were at Eton together, he, being high in the school, chose

Praed, who was much younger, as a player who could meet him on equal terms. These are fair examples of men of letters that were chess-players. Doubtless many more might be mentioned.

The next is to Mr. Campkin, who was at this time making an index to a book on the Archæology of Sussex.

March 14, 1875.

My dear Campkin,—Your pleasant budget of prose and verse was jolly to read in bed on a dull Sunday morning, when our one monotonous bell cacophonously calls us to church.

Those verses in "Adversaria" are Annie S——y's, and the rest are just as good. You shall read them in Knowl Hill Rhymes when you fling aside your big Index and come and see

Mortimer and Frances.

February 27, 1875.

Dear Townshend Mayer,—The *St. James's* for March has reached me, for the which, thanks. Of course it does not as yet in any way represent your editorial conception.

I don't think the general public will care much for impracticable proposals like that of my old friend S——.

In this parish of about 850 inhabitants, there are eleven public-houses and beershops . . . one to about 16 adult males. If a Bill were brought in by which this excess could be reduced throughout the country, moderate men would support it. Why should not the inhabitants, instead of the county magistrates, decide whether a new house is necessary, or whether a licence should be removed? Note this significant fact or sorites of facts. The majority of houses belong to the brewers. In the country almost all brewers are bankers. Few J.P.'s can be found who do not wish to be on good terms with their bankers.

Yours,

MORTIMER COLLINS.

After this letter I think I may quote a few lines from "Adversaria" on Temperance, March 6th.

Sir Wilfrid Lawson, when the Bill was brought in for closing the Custom Houses on Bank Holidays, said he thought it would be well to close the public-houses also. This shows how intemperate temperance makes men. Sir Wilfrid has no sympathy for the man who on his rare holiday walks a dozen or a couple of dozen miles, and is glad of a pint of honest English ale thereafter.

Sir Wilfrid has caught the spirit of Joe Miller, and

gives us *crambe recocta* in the form of ghostly old jokes; but possibly a bottle of dry champagne might make him really brilliant. There is one consideration that seems not to occur to him; that indeed he is not in a position to realize. Born to great estates, he has never known a money trouble. He is unable to conceive the condition of a man who, though he cannot pay for a dinner, can buy a glass of ale.

What use is a crusade against brewers' monopoly, and parochial veto on the magistrates' licensing powers? Were I a country gentleman, I would brew first-class ale, and supply all my tenants and dependents at cost price. There could be no better cure for Radicalism, which is, I think, due in a great measure to gin-drinking.

From "Adversaria" of March 20th I quote three paragraphs which give some notion of our poet's ways and sympathies.

I have just been cutting some trees. As I write I see the chips flying from a fir that long has taken all the strength out of the lawn at the point where it stood. The wielder of the axe, a namesake of mine, by the way, though whether kinsman or not I cannot guess, would in my judgment beat Mr. Gladstone himself in disestablishing trees. He works with a will. Firs, I find, have no tap-roots, but run out lateral roots to a great

extent, whence they ought never to be grown on lawns. My woodcutter seems to find it requisite to refresh himself very frequently at the adjacent hostelry, which bears the poetic name of "The Seven Stars," and is kept by a man just like the portrait of Daniel Lambert on Ludgate Hill (does it still exist?), all but the pleasant expression of countenance. I wonder does Mr. Gladstone take a "peck" jar of old ale out with him when he goes to thin the Hawarden woodlands?

The close time for wild birds began last Monday, the 15th of March. I hope all my readers who live in the country will take care that the bucolic louts do not shoot down the beautiful birds whom the law protects. I have for many years been pleading the cause of the "angels of the air" in prose and verse; perchance now that the Baroness Burdett Coutts has taken up the question, it may become fashionable not to wear feathers in the dainty hats and bonnets with which ladies adorn themselves. Kingfishers' plumage looks pretty in a hat; but how would the lovely wearer like to see a kingfisher shot as he flies across the river, looking like a feathered fragment of rainbow? Would she not shed a tear or two for the glorious bird's lonely mate?

I don't know when Sir John Lubbock's Bill for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments comes on, but it has my best wishes. Most important is it that all our great relics, from Stonehenge downwards, should be carefully guarded. I, who have walked through most

English shires, and searched for all possible records of the heroic and religious past, feel that I have a right to speak strongly on the topic. Indeed, I should rather like to be a Curator of Ancient Monuments, at a reasonable salary. It would be great fun in fine weather.

The following verses evidently refer to the day when the writer was cutting down the trees mentioned in "Adversaria."

Louisa, you're a naughty child,
To say my hand was shaking,
Because upon me Bacchus smiled,
When you my queen were taking!

When you are thoroughly awake,
And find out every error,
Staunton himself at chess might quake,
And feel a mortal terror.

The simple truth—now do not frown—
Will prove that you're suspicious:
I had been cutting branches down,
Like Gladstone—the capricious.

The hand that guides the fluent pen,
For the axe needs other muscles;
The poet's nerves grow tremulous when
With a tough tree he tussles.

But you, who conquer me at chess,
  Have an effect more weighty,
And when you put me in a mess,
  Whispers I hear of Ate.

What wonder, when I saw my fate,
  I could not well dissemble?
Is not that awful word, checkmate,
  Enough to make one tremble?

M. C.

The next piece, which I take from the "Loiterer" of the 20th of March, is perhaps worth quoting.

"A she-correspondent for me, always provided she doesn't cross," said (I think) Isaac Disraeli. How heartily I agree with him! The fact is more manifest now-a-days, when the men who can write good letters to their friends have seldom leisure to do it. I am fortunate in having several "she-correspondents" (don't scowl), O critic! I am "the marriedest of men," (as poor dear Bob Brough put it in one of his choicest rhymes) and they generally send me something pleasant. This morning, for example, a lady writes: "What grievous sin has the nation committed that we are afflicted with this weather? If Gladstone were in office I could understand it, but with a Tory Government one expects better things." There's a little Tory for

you! Surely Disraeli is wise in supporting Forsyth's Bill, if the ladies are all going to vote for him. That they will seems clear. He is quite the ladies' man among Prime Ministers, if only as the author of *Henrietta Temple*, the most sentimental of love stories, yet fuller of real comedy than a play of Sheridan's. Often I take down my copy to look at some of the conversation, it is a part of a set that I picked up by accident which belonged to the Premier's butler, who bore the appropriate name of Grapes. How charming is Count Mirabel—a reflex of the inimitable D'Orsay, to whom the book was dedicated. "Fancy," he says, "a man ever being in low spirits. Life is too short for such *bêtises*. The most unfortunate wretch alive calculates unconsciously that it is better to live than to die. . . . The sun shines on all; every man can go to sleep; if you cannot ride a fine horse it is something to look upon one; if you have not a fine dinner, there is some amusement in a crust of bread and *gruyère*." And again, when Count Mirabel is asked whether he is not afraid of being bored, he replies, "I do not understand what this being bored is. He who is bored appears to me a bore. To be bored supposes the inability of being amused; you must be a dull fellow." Doubtless a fair sketch of Count d'Orsay's character. One thing is quite clear to any reader of *Henrietta Temple*, Disraeli is the ladies' premier. No Prime Minister of England ever wrote such a charming love-story, or any love-story at all so far as I remember.

Here is another scrap from another she-correspondent, received this morning, suggestive in its way: —"The Vicar of W. has joined the Band of Hope Temperance Society. . . . By-the-bye, the curious part of the business is, that he invests the greater part of his money in a monster brewery! This is a fact." What are the hopes of the Church when clerical gentlemen do this sort of thing? I have always held that a priest in holy orders ought to belong to no society whatsoever, save that supreme society in which he holds dignity and responsibility. If the Church of England cannot make men temperate, will the Good Templars or the Band of Hope be likely to do so? It is painful to think that the old-fashioned parsons are passing away, and that when the question of disestablishment is forced to the front, there will be such an amount of clerical silliness to urge in its favour.

"Sir Everard Eresby" mentioned in the next is the name of a poem by Mortimer Collins, which was printed in the *St. James's Magazine*. "The Ladder of Light" was never finished, but is a pretty fragment.

March 21, 1875.

DEAR TOWNSHEND MAYER,—I need hardly say that I am well pleased you like "Sir Everard Eresby" so much. If the public are equally able to appreciate, I could at

at a reasonable interval send you another longish poem, "The Ladder of Light." It is not yet finished.

I have retained your revise, being glad of a copy. If the sheet is not worked off, I may note that the printer has omitted inverted commas before "She was kin of mine" . . . (p. 6); also that on p. 5, l. 2, debonair should be in Roman letters. The word is used by Chaucer, Milton (the "Allegro"), and Dryden, and is therefore no alien. I am strongly in favour of preserving old English words which the ruck of writers are apt to drop. Shakespeare used 15,000 words, Milton about 8000; a common day-labourer seldom gets beyond 300. Mr. Gladstone's speeches are reckoned to contain 10,000. The three pages of Mr. Paget's article seem to show that it is of great value. What he says of "middle-class niggardliness and ignorance" is only too true. We are too much under the thumb of these mere hucksters, who are filling the House of Commons with atrocious dulness and self-interest. It is six years since I described them in a letter to Disraeli . . . .

> Brewers and bankers, men of odious omen,
> Auriferous fellows of immense abdomen,
> Flashy directors, with their diamond rings—
> Such are the mass of our six hundred kings.

Things are now worse.

When Mr. Paget says (p. 14), "The column was no match for the line," he might have indicated that it

requires a thoroughly gallant race to fight in line, which is obviously the finest military method. The phalanx of Pyrrhus was better than the column: but if you can get men brave enough to advance in line without funk, and to form in square when stout resistance is necessary, you multiply your army by ten. One brave man is worth any number of cowards, who fly like sheep in a panic.

Forgive prolixity and scribbling paper, also heterography, if there is any, for I can never spell in an east wind.

Ever yours,
MORTIMER COLLINS.

In March, 1875, Mortimer wrote some lines for the Secretary to Mr. Clement Scott, inviting him to the Cottage.

Near Maidenhead Thicket a nightingale sings
To a Union Club poet; she hasn't got wings,
But she has got a nest where, in fortunate times,
There are poets who come and are brimful of rhymes,
And she says when the flowery Aprilis is here,
And the cuckoo comes in with the sweet of the year,
She hopes he'll run down for a dinner and bed,
And bring all the nonsense he has in his head.

'Tis a queer little cottage full kiss'd by the sun,
Where hard work is oftentimes varied by fun,

When the Master declares, Epicurean sinner,
He can't write a sentence without a good dinner;
Where friends come and go in the merriest way,
And are always quite full of their larks while they stay,
Where C. S. for a time [let us hope it] may be
Not very much bored with,

His truly,
F. C.

P.S. As your crest is an Owl, let me say
I can show you some owls when you wander this way,
'Tis the bird of 'Αθήνη γλαυκῶπις, and Fame
Has chaff'd me ere now with that blue-stocking name;
But I never try tragedy, epic, or ballad,
And prefer being famed for a smile or a salad.

March 26, 1875.

My dear Townshend Mayer,—I feel prosy this Good Friday midnight (it is a dull day in the country), and I feel disposed to inflict some of my prosiness on you. Please forgive my vile paper, for I write in my bedroom, and I could find no other without disturbing my wife (who is in the Land of Nod) by going downstairs. When you come down here you will, I think, approve a bedroom I have had built specially for night-work, of which I often do a great deal: indeed in summer I don't knock off till between three and four. By the way, of course bring Paget, especially if he doesn't mind sleeping in the wine-cellar.

I heartily hope the *St. James's* will succeed. Charles Reade's delightfully murderous attack on me and my wife will become intelligible to you if you look at this week's *Athenæum*. I agree with you that he has definite power: but has he created a *character?* That is the crucial test of a novelist. I am obliged to you for an offer of a word in the *Olla*, but I fear, if I deal with him as you suggest, it will look as if I were puffing myself, specially as my new book, "Sweet and Twenty," is out on April 9. Edmund Yates (do you know him?) wants me to reply in the *World*, but I think not. Still, much will depend on what next he, C. R., says after my wife's letter in this week's *Athenæum*. One oughtn't to praise one's wife, but I think she has a terse and clear way of putting things.

I've for years had a great notion of a series of quasi-Horatian epistles, touching matters social and literary, and, not too freely, matters political. They might be addressed sometimes to real, sometimes to imaginary characters. Would you like me to try one or two? You see they could be stopped at once if the public objected.

I feel a very strong sympathy with you, working so bravely under such terribly weakening physical trials. You must have a glorious courage! I should have given up long ago. Your case, my dear friend (if I may so call you), is a noble proof of the soul's supremacy, and thence of its immortality. You are a martyr

to some physical evil, but it is conquered by the freshly implanted divine spirit. I have had my fights, as most men of letters have, but I cannot understand your indomitable gallantry. You are a stronger soldier in the Army of Light than I could be.

I have a strong feeling, which I swear you will share, that fiction should be healthy. I did not take to fiction till after a long pull at journalism, and then it was against the grain. However, there were opportunities, and I believe I have now written about a dozen novels; but the fights I have had with my publishers would amuse you. I am *too* something .... classical, eccentric, amorous, indecorous—Heaven knows what! Then, having been a Tory editor all my life, of course the Radical critics were instructed to abuse me; and I have always thought the most delightful thing I know in criticism was about a novel (I forget which) in the *Saturday*. I quoted a line from Catullus, in which occurred the word *mens;* the printer turned the *n*, and made *meus* of it. The *Saturday* good-naturedly remarked that anything that distantly resembled Latin would suit Mr. Collins.

I quite look forward to your coming down here when the weather improves, and I think it will improve soon, for I have already had nightingales in my trees—the earliest I remember. It is recorded as a great wickedness of mine, that one spring morning a few years ago the nightingales awoke me at about four in

the morning, and I turned in a half-sleep and exclaimed, "D——n those nightingales!" Would that do as the basis of a poem to be called the "Poet's Anathema"? Queer pendant to Keats's divine ode, especially if done in the same metre.

Yours, *ἀεί*,
MORTIMER COLLINS.

The Horatian Epistles alluded to in the last letter were not done for the *St. James's Magazine*, as Mr. Townshend Mayer's politics were different from Mortimer Collins's.

Some twelve months later than this date, Mortimer proposed to Mr. Fred. Locker that they should write Horatian Epistles to one another in one of the Magazines, and Mr. Locker seeemd to fall in with the idea at the time; but Mortimer Collins did not live to carry it out.

The next sentence is from "Adversaria," of March 27th.

My tortoise, who has lived on nothing in the greenhouse all the winter, is now prowling about the lawn, and wildly dissipating on dandelion leaves. What a strange torpid existence creatures of this sort seem to

lead! They are meant for a lesson to us, doubtless; and I realize the extremes of movement when I see in the blue sky my carrier pigeons whirling at about a mile a minute, and on the green turf my tortoise walking about a foot in the same time. Well, according to the Homeric hymn, the tortoise suggested the idea of the lyre to Hermes, son of Maïa, swiftest-winged of gods; so extremes meet in many ways.

On March 27th there was a letter in the *Times*, in which Mortimer Collins describes his garden. I am endeavouring to give a picture of his life in his own words so far as I can, as it will be much better than anything I could express concerning him, therefore I quote what seems to me to best carry out my scheme.

Although the succession of easterly wind has kept back the spring flowers, the birds appear to be arriving early and breaking early into song. This year there will be no need to quote Plautus—

"Metuo ne lusciniolæ defuerit cantio;"

for last evening two young nightingales were singing against each other in my trees. The earliest date given by Gilbert White, of Selborne, for the nightingale is the 1st of April; the latest, the 1st of May.

I heard what White aptly calls the willow-wren's

"shivering note" on the 20th of March. The earliest date he records is the 17th of April, the latest the 7th of May.

Sir John Lubbock, in his charming work on the relation between insects and wild flowers, says (p. 53), —"*Anthophora pilipes* and *bombus hortorum* are the only two North European insects which have a proboscis long enough to reach to the end of the spur of *Delphinium elatum*. *A. pilipes*, however, is a spring insect, and has already disappeared before the *Delphinium* comes into flower, which seems to depend for its fertilization entirely on *bombus hortorum*."

Yet yesterday a pair of insects that strongly resembled the male and female *bombus* were flitting over my hyacinths. I mention this as a matter of suggestion to lovers of out-door science. A skilled writer might treat as wisely the connexion of birds with insects as Sir John Lubbock has treated that of insects with flowers. I am no "ologist" of any kind, I regret to say, but merely one who loves in leisure moments to witness

"The admirable drama of small things."

It may be worth notice that my garden is not quite an acre, close to the high road on one side and to a frequented by-way on the other. Some people, probably, would scarce believe how much life in bird and insect and flower so small a space may include.

MORTIMER COLLINS.

Knowl Hill, Berks, Lady Day.

The next is to Miss L. C.

S. Balbina.

Learn Latin by all means, dear Louisa, and when you have learnt it, I will show you what to read. Why shouldn't Greek follow?

Frances says, "Bring your needle;" of course we both say, "Bring yourself also, and we hope yourself will be healthy and jolly and poetic."

Lusciniola is the diminutive of luscinia, and means a young nightingale. Astaci and Astu have no connexion. Astacus is a lobster; Astu is a name for the City of Athens, even as we call London, Town. It means, in fact, THE town. As to "growing slow," we'll discuss "thick" as they say in Wilts, to-morrow.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

P.S. Frances is not very well, I grieve to say. I hope to get to London soon for a few days, which will do her good, I know.

CHAPTER II.

APRIL, 1875.

In April, 1875, was published "Sweet and Twenty" [Hurst and Blackett]. There are in this, as in most of Mortimer Collins's works, several personal sketches. The Canon Tremaine of the book was the Rev. R. S. Hawker, of Morwenstow, the Cornish poet.

The dedication is to one whom Mortimer Collins counted amongst his most intimate friends, who was a very frequent visitor at the Cottage, and an old friend of the author's wife:—

Dear Charlie,—Will you look with favouring eyes
Upon a book wherein some things are new,
Mingled with sketches you will recognize?—
A book I gladly dedicate to you.

Although in civic business deep immersed,
Truly you love the *dolce far niente,*
And for idyllic scenes full often thirst—
Green lawns and laziness and SWEET AND TWENTY.

Yet there's another reason, this above,
Why I assail you with a Dedication:
'Tis that you love the lady whom I love,—
"To love her is a liberal education."

This novel is, perhaps, more carefully worked out than most of the others, but it has the same eccentric and poetic characters in it. Miss Litton and Fiddler Carr are very prettily described.

I will quote a few sentences, where the author expresses his own opinions on any subject. He says,—

The human race, of both sexes, may be divided in two classes—those who grow fast, and those who grow slow. The second are, as a rule, the more valuable. The oak of England, tardy in its growth, is of greater worth than the gourd of the prophet who amazed Nineveh, or than the shrub Khardal, erroneously recorded as mustard in the Gospel. You will often

meet a weedy boy of sixteen or seventeen, who has already "seen life," by which he means experimenting on its vices, and who is in a chronic state of beer and tobacco. He lounges about the stables and is familiar with the grooms, is even more familiar with the female servants. He knows more than a healthy, well-trained young fellow of twenty; he will probably die early or live a scamp.

In another place he says,—

There are cities that become ideas. If you utter the word Rome *three* ideas pass through the mind—conquest, debauchery, superstition. A city is not a mere geographical expression, or the accident of a river. If a competent historian could find sufficient materials for the history of London for about twelve centuries, it would be a book of delicious fascination. I fear that both historian and materials are wanting. What is London? England, with all England's imperial dependencies crystallized into the smallest space possible.

* * * * * *

It is strange that England, which has produced the greatest of poets, has not yet had a great architect. Wren was a fine imitator, but cannot we English set up a Michael Angelo of our own? I fancy our finest geniuses in architecture have never caught their chance.

Architecture is a supreme art, and no man can be an architect without the true poetic faculty. Sculpture and painting are subordinate to it. Music is meant to move in mighty edifices. The great architect has great work to do.

In another place, talking of a woman with a temper, he says,—

A woman who can't scold is never of much use. I like a woman *with a temper*. Its very existence shows that she loves her husband and children.

Here is a pretty little bit of nature-painting, in which the author was always so happy:—

He sat down on the bank under a great beech-tree, with a white, straight stem like a column. She stood before him like a school-girl before her master. It was a pleasant, cool, solitary corner, with leaves above and moss below, and a little river rippling softly over the arrowy water-weeds. Now and then a swallow dipped or a fish sprang to the surface. A great dragon-fly balanced himself in air for awhile, then suddenly darted into indefinite space. An unseen lark sang high above.

And, again, he talks of—

The beautiful fretwork of an October hoarfrost upon

the grass, and the furze bushes, while the larks sang invisibly, and the bullfinches fluted from the dog-rose sprays.

And, again, he speaks of—

Flowers that smelt all the more delicious because the dew-pearls of night were just touched by the delicious warmth of dawn.

In another place he says,—

It must be remembered that there is a vast difference between the agony of a high nature and the anguish of a low nature. In one case there is unconquerable resistance—in the other early submission.

Mortimer Collins's readers will, I think, all agree that he had a high conception of women. There is an epigrammatic sentence in the first volume of "Sweet and Twenty" which is a most perfect description of a true woman. He says,—

The old lady of Westbury recognized in her the true type of womanhood, calm at the core amid all its vivacity, free from all affectation, and superior to all sentiment.

In another place he says,—

As there are countries in which certain plants cannot grow, so there are minds to which certain ideas are incommunicable. Tolerance in a Roman Catholic or a Calvinistic brain is as devoid of possibility as the growth of the date-palm in England. To implant the idea of loyalty in a French brain is as difficult as to make our English oak flourish in France; while to make the average Englishman believe in equality would be harder than to grow a grape here that would make claret.

In describing a cathedral, which in "Sweet and Twenty" he calls Northminster, he says,—

Every old cathedral has its special character, suggested doubtless in the first instance to the architect by the character of the people and the place. Northminster strikes you by a somewhat sullen grandeur; all its arches are heavy; its ornamentation is on a broad scale; its windows are full of the deepest colour; its peal of bells is on a mighty scale; its two towers (especially the elder) might be living rocks defying all the passion of the sea. As you look at Northminster Cathedral, you cannot believe the church that built it will pass away. There is a sign of permanence in it.

In the next sentence I quote, the author well

describes himself. He would see a myriad things when out walking, and would point out many beauties or curiosities which his companions would pass without observing; and his remarks were not dry and learned, as if he were well up in all the "ologies." He knew Nature intuitively and by observation, and was happy in such knowledge.

To the man who thinks, every fresh face is a new science. A walk of a dozen miles will give to such a man as many original thoughts as are contained in any book he is likely to read. The skylark has a message for him, the beech-tree an idea. But there are those who cannot pass certain limits; within those limits they are brilliant fellows, and beyond them as dull as a secondhand bookseller's clearance catalogue.

Who but a lover of birds could thus describe a wren's nest?—

A wren, no bigger than her little finger, with a nest deep, deep in the warm hedge moss, and a lot of little spotted eggs that will soon be molecules of music wrapped in feathers.

And, again, the next few lines :—

On the stone water-vase stood a crimson-breasted robin, looking ruefully at the snow, and wishing he had a worm for breakfast. A pair of blackbirds had come close to the house, and were probing the ground where the holly had kept the snow from entirely obscuring the turf; *the cock, true sable with a yellow bill, the hen, soft brown with a dim orange breast.*

Mortimer often broke into measured lines, like the last two, although I have heard him say that he did not consider it correct to do so.

The following bit will remind many, who knew the author, of hot days on the lawn at Knowl Hill, when Mortimer was full of brilliant wit and verse, when he made every one around him feel that life was a poem :—

It was glorious August weather, too hot to sit out of doors except in the shade—weather that stimulates the brain, while it makes the hand indolent; weather for wit that shall never be printed, for songs to be sung once and never again. No wave of ether stirred. The great trees around Westbury Place slept and were silent. The birds were too lazy to sing after matins.

And then, again, the following description of

winter, where the author, in the very joy of his heart, breaks out irrepressibly into verse:—

The fire burnt frostily. Out of doors our friend Helios, lord of health and joy, was doing his utmost to melt the ice. Very calm was the day; not a breath of air stirred. The outside chill and the inside comfort were in absolute antithesis. A defiant kettle sang upon a trivet,—

Who cares for winter
While there's a splinter
Of oak to be burnt anywhere?
While the good trees grow,
We can baffle the snow,
And laugh at the frost in the air.

The next sentence was written, apropos of one of the characters in "Sweet and Twenty," who was expelled from the University:—

It would be better if the University, instead of expelling a brilliant undergraduate who takes to atheism (the measles of the mind), could flog him into common sense.

In all his later works Mortimer Collins is very happy in his conception of women:—

There is a fine line of Byron's—

"The mind, the music breathing from her face,"

which admirably shows the highest conceivable class of beauty—the beauty wherein you think not what colour a woman's hair, or whether her eyes be grey or azure or hazel, or whether her bosom has a soft curve, her hand a graceful form, her body altogether an easy lissom grace. All about her is the product of her unseen spirit, which shapes her into loveliness, and gives music to her voice . . .

The next sentence is a perfect epigram on woman, and is worth remembering:—

The trinity of womanhood which Paris had to disentangle is immensely ancient and intensely modern. You cannot worship a woman who has not a touch of Hera, nor live with her intelligently unless she has a touch of Athene, nor love her to the very heart unless she has a touch of Aphrodite.

The next few lines are, perhaps, worth quoting, as showing the author's opinions:—

It has been remarked that people who write plays and novels fall into their chief mistakes by giving more weight to the unlikeness that there is between human beings than to their likeness to each other; but the likeness is far greater than the unlikeness, and must be

thus regarded by the true artist. The author who takes hold of a single dominant quality, and forms it into a man or woman, is simply a caricaturist, and might just as well label his characters with names that would indicate them.

The greatest character created by Shakespeare, Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, puzzles the critics and baffles the actors because he is so very human. He does first what any man would do who was clear-sighted yet superstitious; loyal to his father's memory, yet loving his mother; a prince every inch of him, yet fond of easy intercourse with other men; a true lover of a lady, yet desirous that no other creature should be drawn into the whirlpool of misery which he saw before him. Now there is more humanity in the greatest poet than there is poetry, and in the greatest mathematician than there is mathematics, and in the noisiest costermonger than there is costermongering; and my experience leads me to think that the same may be said of lawyers, stockbrokers, critics, and other abused classes. We must draw the line, I suppose, at the *fœneratores qui in odia hominum incurrunt*—at the *leno communis pernicies adolescentium.*

Writing on Christmas in "Sweet and Twenty," the author says,—

Sagacious friends of mine severely ask me, What is

the use of the follies of Christmas? The answer is easy. We are burdened with the enormous work of the world. A year now holds ten times the work for any energetic brain that it held a century ago. It is an absolute delight to have a time when the wisest of us all can play the fool at his pleasure. The Romans recognized this in their Saturnalia. We might with advantage extend our holidays; and thanks to Sir John Lubbock and his associates, something has been recently done in this direction; but it is quite clear that more might be done. The world should have a week's idleness at Christmas, and the rich should make that Yule-tide joyous for the poor. If you are a Christian, gentle reader, keep this wintry tide in such a way as to do good to your fellow-creatures; if you are not a Christian, show a good example to those who are.

Mortimer Collins shows all through his writings his love for ancient Greece and all things Grecian. Probably not every one will agree with the sentiments in the next passage I quote:—

Greece and Rome have both left their mark on the world; but which was the greater? Greece, surely. Had not Aristophanes lived, that empire of the world that was won by Rome would have been won by Athens.

The great Tory poet and wit ruined by his ridicule the schemes of Alcibiades, who otherwise would have conquered Carthage and Italy, outdone all the Scipios and Cæsars, and made Athens the omphalos of the world. Aristophanes changed the current of events and gave Rome its chance. It was a definite misfortune for the world. Athens could never have fallen to the level of Caligula's Rome; and when Christianity came upon the world with its flood of light, it would have been more reasonably understood by the appreciative Greeks. Bigotry could not have fastened on the City of the Violet Crown. A Pope of Rome came naturally enough after a series of debauched and bestial emperors. But the lucent atmosphere of Athens would poison a Pope.

The following might well serve for a description of the author's own garden :—

They went down to a pretty lime walk at one side of the lawn. There was a single row of limes, which threw their branches right over the path and on to the lawn, so that they formed a pretty avenue. There was the buzz of innumerable bees in the trees.

In the second volume of "Sweet and Twenty" there is an excellent and faithful picture of the late Rev. R. S. Hawker in his home at Mor-

wenstow. When Mr. Hawker died, a year ago, two gentlemen thought it worth while to write each a biography of him. These biographies caused much dispute; there was a long correspondence in the papers about them. Some of Mr. Hawker's friends consider that Mortimer Collins has given in Canon Tremaine a truer portrait of the poetic Cornishman than either of his biographers have done.

Mortimer Collins had always a strong feeling against Dissent, and expressed it often.

In the next lines I quote he is writing with reference to Irontown in "Sweet and Twenty."

"It is in these towns of rapid and recent growth that the seeds of Dissent are so easily grown. The population becomes too large for the vicar to care for personally. Little colonies of cottages arise at a distance from the church, and some little Bethelite from a neighbouring town comes on a Sunday afternoon, and chooses a spot of ground where he can easily gather a crowd, and preaches what he chooses to call "the Gospel." His idea of the Gospel generally consists in bawling out, at the top of his voice, a few sentences about eternal damnation and everlasting fire. By putting a great

deal of emphasis on these unpleasant words he makes a great deal of effect, and a lot of hysterical women are "converted," or "called," or whatever the phrase is, and in time a chapel is built.

I next quote from the *Loiterer* of April 3rd—

To me Easter Monday is no more a holiday than any other day; but, then, to me all days on which I have health and sunshine are holidays, for I love my work, and I wholly agree in the great saying, *Laborare est orare.* I add, *Laborare est vivere.* People are so seldom content. A skilled artisan told me he would like to be a clerk; a bank clerk, he would like to be an actor or or a scene-painter. Now, to such folk I commend the homely words of the Church Catechism: "Do your duty in that state of life unto which it hath pleased God to call you." Heaven forfend I should discourage a noble, healthy ambition; but ambition will find an opportunity, while the morbid craving for change often leads to disaster.

In a letter which was published in the *Times* last Saturday I noted, that I had heard the nightingale and the willow-wren much earlier than in any previous year, and I think that birds and insects this year are curiously early, though flowers are late. If Gilbert White of Selborne were alive, he would make a capital presi-

dent for a society to be spread over England, and extended in time wherever Englishmen dwell, which should take accurate record of all ornithic, entomic, and botanic facts. The connexion between birds, insects, and flowers is so suggestive, that really I think such a society should be started. I have not thought of a brief name for it. I have thought of a president—Sir John Lubbock is the very man, as we cannot resuscitate dear Gilbert White. Such a society would have a wide field of investigation in the changes of the years. When we learn from Sir John Lubbock that there is an orchis which cannot live without the wasp to impregnate it, we have a faint clue to innumerable facts which can only be reduced to scientific system by wide observation and careful induction. Every year varies in its product of birds, insects, and flowers. I have heard it remarked that hornets are numerous about once in four years. This year is a good one for crocuses, a bad one for hyacinths. These subtle operations of nature are well worth investigation, *for the more we know of the working of the world the nearer we are to the Maker of the world.* So I wish somebody would inaugurate (I believe that's the penny-a-liner's word) the society I propose. The copyright is not reserved.

Mortimer Collins's letter to the *Times*, saying he had heard the nightingale on March 24th,

seems to have caused remark. Any one who knew him intimately would never doubt his observations on birds. He was always most accurate. On this occasion he not only heard, but *saw* the nightingale:—

I am the quietest man in the world, yet people will try to quarrel with me. The *Gardener's Magazine* is terribly angry with me, because I happened to hear young nightingales singing on March 24th. It is an early date; had I not learnt the note of the nightingale in my boyhood, when I went to search for bee and butterfly-orchises in Nightingale Valley, Clifton, I might be doubtful. But I live in a vicinage beloved by nightingales, and where they often keep me awake at night. It is suggested by my critic that perchance I heard "two thrushes, or two woodlarks, or two robins, or two blackbirds." If he were on my lawn for half an hour he would know that no such mistake could well be made. Three robins talk to me as I pass under the trees, and I know their several notes. I have blackbirds, and thrushes, and missel-thrushes, and know their beautiful voices perfectly. No, it won't do. Ornithology is not an exact science. I have heard the same birds since.

The editor of the *Gardener's Magazine*, Mr. Shirley Hibberd, is a gentleman for whose work in the world

I have high respect. His books are on my shelves. But he ought not to permit a contributor to imagine that there was any epigram in "! ! !" No number of notes of "admiration" (*sic*) will make an epigram. That I heard the nightingale a few days earlier than Gilbert White is certain, and is worth recording in connexion with this curious season. My critic is tremendously severe on me because I say they were *young* nightingales, and jumps to the conclusion that they were this year's birds. If I called somebody a young girl, would it mean she was a baby in long clothes? By a young nightingale I mean a last year's bird, whose song is imperfect for want of practice. All song-birds begin tentatively, and improve as they grow older. The young thrushes get finer song every day, as I have reason to remark just now.

My critic says that "The nightingale of the newspapers sings *a month or two* in advance of the Philomela of poets and naturalists, and is audible only to those who cultivate the *belles lettres*," &c., &c. I am amused to see poetry put on one side and the *belles lettres* (an obsolete foreign term) on the other. I should have thought that the accomplished editor of the journal in question, who has *himself* "cultivated the *belles lettres*," would hardly have treated with absolute contempt the independent observation of one who, though no ornithologist, is philornithic, and who, perhaps, knows more about nightingales than most

men. I have been brought into contact with several wonderful snarers of the *luscinia*, and when there's nothing else to write may possibly loiter among my ornithic reminiscences. And at this moment, if anybody wants a nightingale, I can tell him where one is to be found. The gentlemen who abuse me in the papers are almost always kind enough to send me a copy of their paper, and for this I am much obliged. After more than a quarter century of strenuous journalism it would be strange if I had not trod on somebody's literary or political corns, since at all times I have spoken out my mind. Well, I get my critics and criticisms, and hope I profit by them, since it is never too late to mend, as Mr. Charles Reade has remarked —since also that in my belief the criticisms of the lowest creatures are worth calm consideration from the higher. If a man could get at the opinion of his horse or dog, or even his pig, as to his actions, it would be worth his while to think over it. In the same way the general judgments of inferior people, even if hostile and splenetic, are worth weighing. I am much obliged by any one who criticasters me as savagely as he pleases in print, if only he will put a little intelligence into his criticism and teach me something. No one who attacks me need be afraid of an action-at-law, even should he declare that I murdered my great-grandmother. These things right themselves, and when I see London journalists raking up an old book of mine (which had

its follies) I am simply amused. Let them laugh at me: why not? A lustrum and more has passed. "I am no more ashamed of having been a Republican," said Southey, "than I am of having been a boy." And I am no more ashamed of having written a certain book, which these people bring up against me at intervals, than Mr. Gladstone is of "The Church considered in its relations with the State" (1840), or Mr. Disraeli of "Vivian Grey" (1825). A man whose youth has no follies will in his maturity have no power. *Sic itur ad astra.* Sow your wild oats and grow the wheat of wealth or the glorious grapes of genius.

* * * * * *

I desire to gossip cheerily, and not to quarrel; but I have the courage of my opinions, and will always defend the Crown, the Church, and the ladies. Gentlemen can take care of themselves.

In "Adversaria" of April 10, Mortimer Collins writes prettily concerning a monument to his favourite, Gilbert White:—

Dear Gilbert White is to be remembered by a restoration of Selborne Church, to which Magdalen College gives 250*l.*, and Lord Selborne 100*l.* There is also to be a cross to his memory. I wonder what he would have best liked as a memorial? No such lover

of nature have we had: he was the Shakespeare of birds. Were there a Chantrey to carve birds in white marble, in memory of him, it would be opportune. Is there no sculptor who could adorn that cross which is to be erected on the plaster with a flying swallow in marble of Sicily? I don't see why his observations of flowers and birds should not be recorded on the cross which is to do him honour.

The following letter was written to Mr. Frowde on hearing that he, as youngest bachelor of the Stationers' Company, had to reply to the toast of "The Ladies:"—

April 11, 1875.

DEAR HARRY,—You'd rather be scorch'd up in Hades
Than have to get up and reply for the ladies:
Yet why? In bright eyes there's a theme to inspire you,
You're a handsome old owl, lots of women admire you,
To the things that you say are you thoroughly deaf—
Or is there a mystery—Mrs. H. F.?

Well, thanks for your lunch which cost nineteen and nine
Tho' the room was too dark, pretty bright was the wine;
And thanks for your sealing-wax red and immense,
Which was done before giants were in the past tense;
And thanks above all for yourself, my dear fellow;
We wish you'd come down to Knowl Hill and grow mellow.

The next was to the editor of the *St. James's Magazine*:—

April 12, 1875.

MY DEAR TOWNSHEND MAYER,—By all means use Iris and Echo if you like it. A letter from my wife to you by this post was written yesterday, before we received Mrs. Mayer's.

By all means use also my scrap on Paget in *Olla*. I dare say he is right in assuming that squares are now obsolete or obsolescent, thanks to the dropping shell. But I am of opinion that we shall not find out the real meaning of modern changes in warfare till an English army is again in the field against European antagonists. No improvement in weapons can do away with the superiority of race over race; and England, which produced Nelson and Wellington, and many other great leaders, and blue-jackets and red-coats worthy to serve under them, will settle a good many naval and military questions in her next great war.

Always yours,

MORTIMER COLLINS.

The next is to Miss L. C., when she was suffering from a sore foot:—

S. Nicodemus.

So, pain has caught her in his clutches:
Louisa limps about on crutches!

Sad! when the nightingale is singing,
And fragrant lily-bells are swinging,
And furze blooms bright (you know the reason)
To show that kissing is in season.

These sunny days will soon restore
The gaiety you had before,
The easy step of Nereid nymph
Who'd tasted Castaly's magic lymph—
I may be heathen (what will follow
From ——) I quite believe Apollo
Has strong recuperative force,
And uses it for you of course;
And probably the reason is,
You're like his sister, Artemis,
Who, of the stronger sex defiant,
Preferr'd a poet to a giant.
And, aided by her wicked brother,
She kill'd the one and kiss'd the other.
You'll find the story, if you please,
In Ovid's Metamorphoses.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

It was about this time that Sir John Lubbock's Bill on Ancient Monuments came before the House. Mortimer Collins took very great interest in it, and hoped to see it pass satisfactorily. His enthusiasm on ancient monu-

ments can be seen from the incident which he relates in the next piece that I quote.

He had begun at this time to feel the pressure of continual work without holiday or change; so he wrote and asked the Premier, if the Bill should pass, to make him a curator of monuments. It would have been an office to suit him exactly, and for which he was adapted, and would have given him the change he so much needed. He wrote the following in the *Press* on April 17 :—

Whatever opinion may be general as to Sir John Lubbock's Bill on Ancient Monuments, there can be no question as to the poetry of the idea, or the pleasantry with which Sir John supported it. Of course the main difficulty is to reconcile the immediate rights of landowners with what may be called the historic rights of the people; but it seems to me that this reconcilement is easy enough, and that landowners will be glad of Government help to keep ancient remains intact. I remember when I was a mere boy threatening a fellow with a thrashing because he was chipping off a bit from one of the stones of Stonehenge; and although it is quite possible he might have thrashed *me*, I am happy to say that he did not try, and that he chipped no more

stone. But I fear the grand mysterious monument has been terribly quarried during the thirty years or so since that occurred. Not every vulgar picnicker finds himself confronted by a plucky school-boy, weedy but pretty long in his reach, who has grasped Sir John Lubbock's idea that Stonehenge is "enigmatical and unique," and who is willing to fight for such an idea. Now it strikes me that Sir Edmund Antrobus will be only too glad to have official aid in saving Stonehenge from gradual demolition. I cannot see why our great abbeys are to be left undefended by the curators or commissioners who may be appointed. I cannot understand why princely courtesy might not have placed the Duchy of Cornwall, full as it is of important relics, within the action of the measure. The fact, I suppose, is that certain official underlings don't want outsiders to meddle with their affairs. But if the Bill, amended as it must be in committee, goes to the Upper House, it would be a graceful thing for the Prince to suggest that the royal duchy should be included in the supervision.

The next piece, which was in "Adversaria" of April 24, I quote because Mortimer Collins talks so lovingly of his trees:—

It is curious to notice the magic of a night. One night's rain, and the trees are full of verdure. A red

chestnut opposite my window, which yesterday had close, compact buds only, is now stretching fans of green leaf towards the humid air. The expanding leaf of the red horse chestnut—improperly so-called, since it is the *Pavia rubra*, and not an *Aesculus*—seems like an aspiring hand spread forth to catch the sunlight and the dew.

"Time," said Hooker, "is the measure of the motion of the spheres." A better definition could not easily be framed. We divide our year's earth-travel and day-travel, and do our work accordingly. The sixty per cent. bill-discounter probably does not consider that three silver full moons will have shone on lovers loitering in leafy lanes, amid sweet chorus of the nightingales, before he can issue his inevitable writ. It is wise to think of the comparative ages of the creatures God has created. A gnat dies in a day, while a tortoise lives two or three centuries. Doubtless, *pace* Darwin, these differences were instituted for man's instruction. It is very sad, as I have lately proved, to lose by old age a dog that was yours in its youth. When a dog has been thirteen or fourteen years your friend you have melancholy pleasure in tending his old age. "Put him out of his misery," says some well-meaning friend. I cannot see it. "The whole duty of a dog," said Christopher North, "is to love man and to keep his commandments." It is a clear corollary that man should act with God-like tenderness towards

his dogs. Now, we compare our tenure of life with the dog's, and the comparison is a silent sermon. What if we compare our life with that of a tree? Of course, we may premise Ben Jonson's lovely lines—

"It is not growing like a tree
In bulk doth make men better be;
Or standing like an oak three hundred year,
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sear:
A lily of a day
Is fairer far in May;
Although it fall and die that night,
It was the plant and flower of light."

As I write I see many trees that I have planted on my lawn, and wonder who will enjoy their shade and bloom in days far off. A distinguished naval officer recently had the courtesy to send me a paper on "Indications of Spring," read before the Royal Society, in 1789, by Robert Marsham, F.R.S., of Stratton, Norfolk. I find that he was a correspondent of Gilbert White, and a great planter of trees. "An oak," he writes, in 1790, "which I planted in 1720 is become now, at one foot from the ground, twelve feet six inches in circumference; and at fourteen feet (the half of the timber length) is eight feet two inches. But I did not begin with beech till 1741, and then by seed, so that my largest is now, at five feet from the ground, six feet three inches in girth, and with its head spreads a circle of twenty yards' diameter."

Tityrus himself might have rejoiced in such a portentous beech grown in half a century. Mr. Marsham lived to ninety. To plant and care for trees is healthful work.

Shakespeare's birthday, which is also St. George's Day, was always kept at the Cottage, and some verses were usually written by Mortimer Collins to his Secretary in honour of it.

The *Laurus nobilis* set by Mortimer Collins in his garden, flourished well there, and doubtless flourishes yet. Some of his friends have grown the poet's laurel from slips of it.

From the *Loiterer* I quote the following:—

Friday, the 23rd of April, is Shakespeare's birthday. I think the birthday of England's greatest man ought to be a bank holiday, specially as it falls when "comes in the sweet o' the year," as the merry rogue Autolycus hath it. I am going to illustrate the event by a quiet little dinner, when libations shall be poured to a bust of the supreme poet, crowned with the *Laurus nobilis*, the poet's bay, that defies the lightning of Zeus. . . . . There occurred to my memory the other day a capital thing of Shirley Brooks's worth preservation. I had occasion to send him a letter from an editorial friend who uses as crest a hand grasping a pen, with

the apt motto, *Hinc orior.* "An excellent device," wrote Shirley in reply, "but why does he spell *ink* with an *h*?" I call that as neat a classic pun as any of Porson's.

CHAPTER III.

MAY TO AUGUST, 1875.

In May, 1875, one of the visitors to the Cottage was Mr. Littleton Hay. In returning to town, he lost his train at Twyford Station, and, while waiting, wrote some verses to Mortimer Collins describing his plight; he also made a sketch of himself sitting on the platform. The Twyford station was more than three miles from the Cottage, so he had walked very quickly in hopes of catching the train. In one verse he says,—

Then I sank on a bench like a rocket
Burnt out. Oh! that tortuous seat!
Each bone seem'd to start from its socket,
To find any rest was a feat—
An almost impossible feat.

Mortimer Collins replied to him in the same metre,—

Your rhymes we have clearly decipher'd,
Your portraiture tells its own tale—
An unfortunate poet at Twyford—
Limp back upon sharp-cutting rail:
Your terrible fate we bewail.

We're sorry of course you were tortured,
But enjoyment is bought with a price,
And apples are crush'd from the orchard,
And poets are squeezed in their vice;
And cider and metre are nice.

Quoth Shelley, "We learn as we suffer,
Poor devils, and teach it in song,"
Which means that the poet is tougher
By far than the average throng,
Him Apollo's afflatus makes strong.

In youth he has voyaged his Odysseys,
In manhood has drunk with the gods,
Made love to the whole of the goddesses,
And smarted 'neath Venus's rods,
And said, "After all, what's the odds?"

So be careless as Phoibos Apollo
Next time that you wander this way,
And let it be long ere the swallow
Has thought of his travelling day,
For remember the summer brings *Hay*.
M. C.

P.S.—When you next cut a caper
In verse, as you very soon will,
Just write on one side of the paper,
And your stanzas fair lasses to thrill
Can be stuck in the Rhymes of Knowl Hill.

The next letter refers to an article which Mortimer Collins was about to write for the *St. James's Magazine*.

DEAR TOWNSHEND MAYER,—To-day is my principal *Punch* day, so I cannot manage anything in the way of copy. I have always heavy work on Thursday; but I think you may rely on me by Friday's post. The *Rugby Rebellion* is the sort of thing I like to do at a heat. Your wife's letter was delightful. I hope her phrase about a pen that had never learnt spelling is not copyright, as I think it might be twisted into a gem of rhyme.

Yours always,
MORTIMER COLLINS.

Mr. and Mrs. Townshend Mayer were visitors at the cottage in May. This was their first meeting with Mortimer Collins, and I have often heard Mr. Townshend Mayer describe his feeling of astonishment at what happened. Being lame he is obliged to take an invalid carriage with him when he travels, and there is generally some difficulty in getting the carriage on to the top of a cab and off again. Even when there are two men there is great difficulty. He was sitting patiently in the cab, and the cabman was wondering however he should get the carriage down when Townshend Mayer saw a big fellow come out of the gate, and walk up to the cab and quietly lift down the carriage with one arm.

I think if Mortimer was at all conceited it was of his bodily strength. He was a little bit proud of such an incident as that.

Then it was the greatest delight to him to take Townshend Mayer in his invalid carriage all over the neighbourhood. He would push the carriage along as fast as he could run, and do it with boyish glee.

Mr. Townshend Mayer was taken ill while staying at the cottage, and he often speaks enthusiastically of Mortimer's kind and thoughtful ways during his illness. When dinner was sent up to the invalid, Mortimer would always go out and pick some sweet-scented flowers to place on the tray.

Mr. Townshend Mayer reminds me of many such kindnesses, but those who have visited Mortimer Collins know how thoughtful he always was of every one around him.

The following I quote from "Adversaria" of June 5th.

Summer at last, apparently; but the wind lingereth in the east. There are people who don't seem the least to care from what quarter the wind blows, and I sometimes am tempted to wish I were one of them; but I change my mind when the sweet south arrives, for then I know that I have enjoyment which my pachydermatous fellow-mortals never can realize. Power of enjoyment and of suffering are in direct proportion. Talleyrand's theory, that all you want to be happy is a hard heart and a strong stomach, is quite true for certain natures. They are as happy *as they can be*—

just like a pig in a sty; or the tortoise which I now see browsing on my lawn, and which simply sleeps through the winter in the greenhouse. But in contrast to that tortoise (from whose kinsman only Hermes could get music) there is a thrush on the very summit of a lime-tree, trying to deafen me in his delight at the glory of June. He is positively shouting his joy. Ha! and now a blackbird has begun to mock him with a mellower note, as if Rossini echoed Verdi. I daresay, in sharp winter, when the pig was warm in his sty, and the tortoise snug by the greenhouse flue, those two choristers of summer were glad to pick up crumbs at my window, and pined for their natural dinner of snails and worms. Yet, dear reader, which would you rather be? Pig or tortoise, mavis or merle?

These lines to Miss L. C. were probably written early in June. She had written from town, telling us she had seen some performing dogs.

Well, Louisa, lady fair,
How d'ye like the London air?
Do the queer performing dogs
Make you pleased with London fogs?
Do you give a thought sometimes
To the lawn beneath the limes,

Where, amid the twilight hushes,
Come the merry merles and thrushes?

Have you, of the country weary,
Seen both Hamlet and Dundreary,
And declared, on lady's oath,
Shakespeare must have written both?
Lord, when London life you've tasted,
How it seems the time is wasted!
Wagner's melodies grow pale
When you hear the nightingale:
Wren that through the laurels flits
Beats the Titiens into fits.

Go into the Ladies' Cage,
See debaters in a rage:
Is it not a prettier sight
Just to see two robins fight.
Swearing at each other freely
Like poor Whalley or Kenealy?

Carleton Blyth, that coachman grand,
Hero of the four-in-hand,
Wants me, when the sun shall gleam,
To take a seat behind his team,
And after that, with pen industrious,
To put in print his name illustrious.
So I think I'll go next week:
Shall I for you the box bespeak

('Tis but an added half-a-crown)
And give you lunch at Windsor Town?

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next was to Miss L. C. while she was in town.

Τέσσαρες αἱ Χάριτες, Παφίαι δύο, καὶ δέκα Μοῦσαι.
Δερκυλὶς ἐν πάσαις Μοῦσα, Χάρις, Παφίη.

That's ancient Greek, yet applies to you,
Louisa fair, I tell you true,
You musn't think it my caprice:
Were there not prophets in ancient Greece?

In the wondrous days when the good ship Argo
Went afloat with its hero-cargo,
Muses and Greece didn't increase:
A limit there was to the power of Greece.

If you've got a Greek scholar in Eaton Square,
He'll say that epigram's true, I'll swear.
But I guess that square is a square unique
If it grows much poetry, English or Greek.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next I quote from the *Loiterer* of June 12th.

Now is the very time for loitering. Not with pen or paper though, but under shady trees which hang over river margins or cool long slopes of virgin turf. However, my pen, and not I, must loiter to-day, and it is possible that any one who saw me at work under full-leafed limes, with a red chestnut, burning lamp-like flowers close by, and with a thousand birds talking and twittering (it is too hot for them to sing) would probably say I have no need to grumble.

The next is to Mr. Townshend Mayer.

He took a pair of Mortimer Collins's pigeons when he left Knowl Hill, and had written to say that he was feeding them with all sorts of food.

June 19, 1875.

DEAR RALPH,—If you feed them pigeons in that atrocious heterogeneous way they'll die of dyspepsia. Seriously, they want simple food to flourish (like me). Hard peas, pure water, green grass, an occasional pinch of salt. Hemp and bread are sometimes useful when there are young ones to be fed.

Bringing in another pair is a dangerous experiment, especially of a different breed. My young birds sometimes get killed by old ones of the same breed. It would be better to leave them to their own devices.

The rabbit has been exchanged for a duck which quacks audibly. I shall have an Irish lady in the house when next you come, for our friend Grantley Berkeley is sending me a beautiful Gordon setter bitch to comfort Big Dog in his troubles. The old muff has run a thorn into his foot now, and it has to be poulticed, and he wants to eat it. I am writing on the lawn in my shirt sleeves at nearly 5 p.m., so you'll guess the weather's improved. Our last parson, dear old Fairbairn, now of Waltham St. Lawrence, called and joined me with a bottle of claret this afternoon; he brought his eldest boy with him, eight years old, who was wild about all our creatures.

The Missus chaffs him about his having so many children, which is a D X Y Z shame, as he has only eight.

Couldn't send Olla, for poor Growl was dying, and we've no heart for anything. Of course 'tis too late now.

Just got proof of first three chapters of *From Midnight to Midnight*. I'd forgotten it. It reads like forked lightning. The first chapter is "A Tiger at Midnight," the second "The World of Spirits."

Nearly forgot to tell you *Echo Bridge* is in Fairbairn's parish, the Missus gave him a copy of it, and he is going to read it in Church to-morrow during the offertory.

May I send a kiss to Gertrude?

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next lines were written to Miss L. C. probably in June.

Loving friend, our Lady Loo,
Nothing we've to say to you;
Not a word, except that we
Want your merry face to see;
And to-morrow you can come,
For we mean to be at home.
Having given up the coach,
Lo, we wait for your approach.

Will you come, or must we wait?
Are you tired of ——'s estate?
Won't you trip this way to seek—
Fair philosophy and Greek?
Often do your joyous eyes
Bring a beautiful surprise,
When beneath the limes you trip
With a pert, provoking lip,
And a smile that seems to say,
"Sunshine comes with me to-day."

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next is from the *Loiterer* of June 19th.

The village referred to is Knowl Hill.

The name on the clock very much irritated Mortimer Collins.

In a village where I have been known to sojourn, there has recently been placed a clock in the church spire. It is the gift of the heir of a noble old gentleman, who calmly trod the paths of life for ninety years, and is dedicated to his memory. Yet, on the face of that clock, in huge letters, stands the not unusual name

SMITH,

that being the patronymic of the clockmaker. Why does this legend glare upon us through the trees? Is it an advertisement purely? Does Smith expect any one who drives by and admires that dial to order a church-clock by return of post? The architect's name is not on the church. Why should the clockmaker's name obtrude itself in that aggressive fashion? "I pause for a reply."

The next I quote is from the same article.

Mortimer Collins used to gather some flowers every evening for the Secretary to wear in her hair. The Secretary, when with pressure of work she had reduced the time for preparing for dinner to a very few minutes, sometimes thought it rather troublesome to have to arrange

the flowers artistically; but she remembered how much pleasure it would give.

Fair reader, do you wear fresh flowers in your hair every evening at dinner? I hope so. It is a charming custom. They are lovely to look at, delicious to smell. Ladies are (mercifully) made as a rule shorter than the less worthy sex; and when you take a pretty girl in to dinner the moss-roses and honeysuckle in her hair heighten her fascination. The scent blends with that of the pine-apple at dessert, and of the fragrant mocha in the withdrawing-room in an exquisitely magical way.

A whiff of eglatere from ladies' tresses
A most magnetic mystery possesses:
Twined in soft hair, the happy floweret tries
To imitate their beauty, fails, and dies.

I have modernized the spelling of this tetrastich, which was written by a maternal ancestor of mine who fought for Charles I.

The tetrastich is of course his own.

The following I quote from "Adversaria" of June 26th.

Nine months have passed since I recorded the death of my faithful little Skye terrier, Fido, and now his

old companion Growl lies beside him beneath the limes. He was born at Wandsworth in September, 1862, so he has had a fairly long life for a little dog. I was present at his birth and christened him Growl, because his first act was to growl at his mother for bringing him into the world without his leave. Poor old boy, he has growled through life, always most at those he loved best, as is the way with some human cynics, and when he let me touch him without growling I knew he was in a bad way. A lion was a coward to the little fellow; he would have attacked one without hesitation. I have known him spring from a boat on the Thames to do battle with an angry male swan in the breeding time, when a black retriever in the boat cowered with terror. He has walked with me through many counties of England, sometimes doing forty miles a day with ease; and once, when walking through Buckinghamshire, we met Mr. and Mrs. Disraeli and just such another little dog in the Hughenden Lane, and, although neither he nor I had been introduced, he commenced a conversation at once. That night we stayed at the "George" at Aylesbury, where I amazed the waiter by eating seven consecutive mutton chops, Growl devouring the bones. Ay, we have had joyous times together, poor little dog; and it is satisfactory to know that, while you shared my gaiety, you had no share in those multitudinous troubles to which man is born.

There is great delight in pilgrimages through Eng-

land, as Chaucer showed in the verse of England's daybreak. Two young ladies, friends of mine, are coming seventy miles to see me, in a few days, in a lady's dog-cart drawn by their famous pony Moonface. They will pass from within sight of Warwick Castle to a distant view of Windsor's stately Towers in three days. Do they dread adventures? No, they hope for them; but giants have nearly all perished out of the earth, and those left behind are weak in the knees; and the knight-errant is gone upon the Stock Exchange; and the troubadour writes for *Punch;* and even the courteous highwayman, like Claude du Val, who lets a lady go unplundered when she had danced a minuet with him, is a pale phantom of the past. Ghosts fled from the wayside inns like rats from a sinking ship, when the mail-coaches stopped; so I fear my *sorores audaces* will arrive here quite safely without having even been frightened. Still there is no knowing. Let us hope that the poetry of life is not wholly extinct, and that they may meet with some delightfully dangerous adventure at the picturesque inn known as "Hopcroft's Holt!"

The next letter was evidently written early in June, but I place it here because it is explained by the last paragraph in the last quotation. It is to Miss M. A. S., who is some-

times called "Margaret" and sometimes "Annie," in Mortimer Collins's letters.

Knowl Hill.

DEAR MARGARET,—Hurrah for the immortal bantam! Hurrah for your "shooling," though I'm d——d if I can find the word in any dictionary. However, it means you and Clara and Moonface are coming this way, and I need not say we shall be delighted to see you. I have had in my time much experience of young ladies, and I have never known any so free from humbug as you are. You seem to have hit on exactly the right road. I don't know Addesbury, but it is three and a half miles from Banbury, and had a population, at the last census, of 2192. It may have an inn, it may have an adventure: I should prefer riding cock-horse to Banbury Cross myself, and trying the Red Lion or the White Lion. But you two children are as wild as Rosalind in the Forest of Arden. Sandford is three and a quarter miles this side Oxford, and I must have walked through it more than once without seeing it. If you don't care to stay at Oxford, better go on to Dorchester, five miles farther, and about twenty miles from us. Its church was once a cathedral, and the bishopric (largest in England) stretched from Thames to Humber. I think I remember drinking some tolerable ale there, but whether there are beds there fit for two young adventuresses I don't know. The

Missus will find all the bachelors she can to meet you. Ella comes on the 12th.

Yours ever,

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

On the 29th of June, Mortimer Collins wrote to the ladies at an inn called "Hopcroft's Holt," where they expected to stay a night on their way to Knowl Hill. But they only baited their pony there and the landlord could not understand to whom the letter belonged. Mortimer Collins wrote to request that it might be sent on to the ladies at Knowl Hill, and it was returned opened. It is in rhyme, but was written in prose, and must have rather astonished the landlord. Some lines are omitted which refer to people in the neighbourhood of Knowl Hill.

Knowl Hill,

June 29, 1875.

DEAR MARGARET AND CLARA,—I write a line to say you'll be each an *avis rara* upon the Queen's Highway. For pretty girls are rare as pearls, and a precious deal more pleasant; and you'll open the eyes to a

monstrous size of many a staring peasant. Your very best plan with a highwayman, if you can't at once dismiss him, if he's young and gay and smells like May, would be, I should say, to kiss him.

Road is very much safer than rail, if we believe Miss Dickenson's tale.

* * * * * *

Now, girls, you musn't let Moonface bolt before you arrive at Hopcroft's Holt—and tell the landlord I'll punch his head if he doesn't give you a jolly spread.

MORTIMER COLLINS.

The following lines are to Miss L. C., who, when Mortimer Collins said she had no faults, replied that she had one, which was Envy.

Louisa has a single fault,
(No girl without one's worth her salt)
Envy its name, 'tis strange to me,
No trace of it in her I see,
Assuage my curiosity:
Whom do you envy, Miss, and why?

You envy our two pilgrims, p'raps,
Who for a "shooling" pack their traps;
Defy the rain that makes us cheerless,
Of highwaymen are wholly fearless.
And quite regret the ancient gay days
When some adventures came to ladies.

But, when you say you're envious,
It cannot be you envy us—
Our power of meeting toils and troubles,
Of blowing fair poetic bubbles,
Of gaining joy in dreariest times
From song of blackbird in the limes.

If envy is the thing to do,
We really ought to envy you—
Your hearty friendliness and kindness,
To trivial faults your loving blindness.
Your mercy, wit, and graceful ease—
O yes, we envy you, Louise.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next is from "Adversaria" of July 10th.

Burnham Beeches is a lovely bit of forest ground: few such spots are there in England. I was there this week in company of very pleasant ladyhood: a naval officer had promised to join us, but missed his train, and missed also an uncommonly good lobster. By that lobster there hangs a tale. Most picnics have some kind of difficulty. I have known the hamper of wine forgotten. I have also known a picnic without a corkscrew. But that has never happened since with me. I never go anywhere without a penknife and a corkscrew. But our lobster! It came down from London to the Bear Hotel at Maidenhead, with other matters,

such as pineapples and strawberries, which help to make a picnic pleasant; but when we opened the basket, we found that lobster was not boiled! However, Mr. Dawson, as amiable a host as ever lived, sent it into the kitchen, and we started twenty minutes later than we had intended, astacus hot from his pot.

Mortimer Collins could always thoroughly appreciate ability in another man. In July, 1875, he had occasion to review a collection of Shirley Brooks's verses from *Punch*. I quote some part of the review, not only to show the appreciation, but because I am sure there are many who will agree with me in saying that almost the same words might have been written of Mortimer Collins himself only a year later.

Thousands of readers who never saw his (Shirley Brooks') vigorous, intelligent face, or felt the grasp of his friendly hand, must yet have had a feeling of friendliness for the man who met them week after week in *Punch* with easy, humorous comment on the affairs of the day. It is the misfortune of those who expend their main energy on periodic literature that their real genius is not always recognized. Theodore Hook may be taken as a typical instance of this, and after an

evening with Theodore Hook, Coleridge said that he was as great a genius as Dante. But when genius expends itself on ephemeral themes it cannot make the same mark on the world as when it attacks and develops a subject whose interest is permanent. Still, the profit to the public is immense. A comic periodical like *Punch*—never indignantly satiric save on stern occasions, always throwing a halo of humour and romance around political and social topics—does much towards lightening the atmosphere, towards taking the sting from political strife, towards reconciling class with class. Such journals are a unique product of the English race: French fun is seldom pure: German fun always heavy . . . .

* * * * * *

No printer ever waited for Shirley Brooks's "copy:" his pen could scarce keep pace with the rapid rush of his ideas. That swift brain movement was quite unforced: his friends know that he seldom wrote a letter without an epigram, and his conversation over the claret and olives was as effervescent and joyous as the foam of Dionysus. At such times he played with ideas, blew iridescent bubbles of thought, showed "the apprehensive forgetive faculty" in its perfection.

The next was written to Mr. Townshend Mayer on 12th July.

"Olla podrida" was a term used by Mr.

Townshend Mayer for an article on general subjects at the end of the *St. James's*.

My dear Ralph,—How are the pigeons? "Olla" is something eatable, isn't it? Here's an idea for dwellers in the country. Keep pigeons: they fly over your trees in the sunlight, and coo upon your roofs, and make the scene lively. Few things are prettier, as Londoners know, than a flight of pigeons in sunny air. Then they are good to eat. With green grass, pure water and peas for food, you can get young ones even at Christmas. I always do. Roast pigeon is good with bacon around him: stewed pigeon is good: the bird enlivens a rump-steak pie. His liver is excellent on anchovy toast. That distinguished epicure, Colonel Money, advises you to eat with him purple Hamburg grapes, and drink claret cup. That was in July: in December other accompaniment would be requisite: and one beauty of the pigeon is that, like the lobster, he is all the year round in season.

As an antidote to this eulogy of the "Albulus Columbus" (as Catullus called Cæsar), I send you a version of the "Persicos odi," not so good as Shirley Brooks's or Thackeray's, but on a new principle:—

Persicos odi, puer, apparatus;
Bring me a chop and a couple of potatoes:
When we are dining care should not await us,
Spoiling our glory.

Simplici myrto nihil ad labores;
All ostentation a confounded bore is . . .
After, a glass of port that sound at core is
Will suit a Tory.

By the way, O editor Ralph, give your dogmatic opinion about anonymous letters. I receive shoals of them, always of course abusive and ungrammatical, since a man who cannot master the grammar of conduct will scarce succeed with the grammar of language. My crime is that on many subjects I hold strong opinions which are not those of the wise and progressive majority. Well knowing the weighty saying, "Nulla vestigia retrorsum," I yet think we have made a good many mistakes lately which we shall not retrieve. But did you ever drive four-in-hand? Picture Disraeli on the box, with Progress for near leader, Disestablishment for off leader, Atheism and Red Republic wheelers, but ready to be leaders in a few stages. Give them their heads! Progress bolts; Disestablishment gibs at the Church spire: nice team for a gentleman coachman! The best thing to tame the beggars would be to have to go at a hill full gallop: and I sometimes think, to drop allegory, that a big war is wanted to bring certain classes of Englishmen to their senses.

There, you villain. If in this nonsense there's any material for Olla, use it.

Yours *ἀεί*,
MORTIMER C.

The incident mentioned in the next quotation I make is worth recording as helping to show Mortimer's open and generous nature.

We had been spending the day at Medmenham, a merry party, consisting of Mortimer Collins, his daughter, Dr. Steele, the dogs, and the Secretary, in the summer of 1870. When it was time to go home the ferryman could nowhere be found to take us across the river. We were afraid we should be late for dinner, as we had loitered longer than we should have done. A boating man, lounging near us, seeing our anxiety, offered to take us across in his own boat. When he had rowed us over and was taking our thanks, Mortimer Collins whispered to the Secretary, "Wouldn't he like to come home with us? he must be dull at the inn, he is evidently a downright good fellow."

The Secretary at once took the hint, and, going up to the stranger, said, "We are Mortimer Collins, his wife and daughter, and Dr. Steele. Will you come home and dine with us, we have three or four miles to walk to our house?"

The stranger said, "I am C—— B——, I shall be delighted to come, but I am in my flannels."

Of course the flannels were not an obstacle, and Mr. C. B. tramped home with us. Mortimer Collins's mother was a little astonished at the gentleman in flannels at the dinner-table, but she was used to her son's odd ways.

Two, *post meridiem*.—I have just lunched and read my *Times*, which has nothing in it worth reading. A dull day, but a deliciously warm one—the first of summer. How divine the days of clear sunshine after a sky of brass and a perpetual drip, drip, drip! No words can describe the beauty visible from the bay windows in which I sit writing. On the right, heavy lime foliage, and a vase where white tumbler pigeons are drinking; on the left, holly and laurel, medlar and scarlet oak. 'Pon honour, as they say in the old comedies, 'tis a shame to have to loiter on paper on such a day as this! If my editor were here upon the lawn, he would say, "Throw the *Loiterer* over, old fellow, and we'll go to the Thames at Medmenham, 'Fay ce que voudras.'" That was the motto of the famous abbey of Bohemians (Medmenham Abbey) founded by Sir Francis Dashwood, Chancellor of the Exchequer in days when financial ministers were

slightly less decorous than Sir Stafford Northcote, and did not mind associating with squinting Jack Wilkes and Churchill, the poet—or poetaster. Lord, how many a day I've had at Medmenham Abbey! A great place for Bohemians. I have made acquaintances there many a time, and never seen them since: good fellows enough, but the men who travel up and down the imperial stream in steam launches, eight oars, randans, are irregular in their movements. I remember, when my *mater* was staying with me a few years ago, bringing home from Medmenham a good sort of fellow in boating flannel, who turned out amusing, though not very literate. The old lady, rather a precisian, scarcely tolerated a man in flannel at the dinner-table, but he made himself agreeable, and she forgave him.

I next quote from "Adversaria" of July 17th.

At this moment starlings and blackbirds and thrushes are tugging away at the worms on my lawn with unusual success. Whether the worms like it or not, the result is feathered music, delighting human ears. Worms are designed to be eaten by birds, and will suffer that treatment through all time, unless Mr. Darwin can induce them to develope into something else. Why should he not? If an ascidian becomes an ape, and an ape a man, there ought to be no difficulty about a worm's becoming a boa-constrictor, and defy-

ing the birds. There is a female blackbird now within my ken feeding four little ones (her second brood of four this year) with indefatigable assiduity.

The next was written to Miss L. C., probably in July.

Tuesday—no, Wednesday.
It is half-past xii.

DEAR LOUISA,—We have both felt very much this last annoyance that you have had. The gold of friendship is destined to be tested, and in unexpected ways. But it stands the test.

Sophocles says (I know you like Greek), Οὐδέν ποθ' ἕρπει ψεῦδος εἰς γῆρας χρόνον. I'll take pity on you this time, and tell you what the sweet singer of Colonos meant, "No lie lives to see old age."

Yes, thus he said, the Attic sage,
"No lie can live to see old age."
Louisa, who is off to where
Less slander's floating in the air,
Will quite forget, by winding Wye,
That folk can live who love to lie,
And when she next pops in her head
Where nought but truth to her is said,
Let's hope the lies will all be dead.
We'll have a laugh beneath the trees,
And drink a health to Sophocles.

We were sorry not to have asked you whether we could meet you anywhere, and walk to Waltham to-morrow. We could study the tombs while you are at the F.'s, and loiter back again. Name time and place, unless, indeed, you like to come this way. My Mercury will await answer.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next I quote is from "Adversaria" of July 17th.

Mortimer Collins often received abusive anonymous letters concerning what he had said in the papers. No man could hit harder in satirical verse than he, and it is curious that the writers of the anonymous letters always spoke of his "weak verse" or "doggrel." If it was weak, why did it trouble them so much?

Do my readers suffer from the plague of impertinent letter-writing? The advertising tradesfolk are bad enough, with their sherry that will cure the gout (I haven't the gout, and touch no sherry) and their quack medicines that will cure everything, and their sales of invaluable articles at a loss, and a thousand other devices to catch flats. *Obiter dictum:* never buy of a tradesman who is always advertising; you will have to help to pay him for his advertisements. Then there are the charity-seekers, who want to send flannel shirts

to Central Africa, or to get an orphan (poor little wretch! let's hope they'll fail) into an asylum, or to build a church in some deserted district. I think if English Churchmen hold their own, and forget their divisions, wherever a church is needed it will build itself. But your worst fiend is the anonymous letter-writer. Holding decided opinions, and having (who coined the phrase?) the courage of my opinions, I have in my time printed things which other people don't like. Well, I see in the papers a great many things I don't like, but I write no letters to their authors. Thought is free. Every man has a right to utter his mind. I shall certainly utter mine so long as I have power to do it adequately.

The next letter was written on July 20, and the references to *Punch* are concerning two contributions by Mortimer Collins.

My dear Campkin,—Silence is not golden on your part. Why don't you write? Above all, why don't you come and see us?

If you glance at *Punch* to-morrow, tell me what you think of the wicked attack on your friend Whalley, on p. 23, and of "Crede Byron," on p. 34.

Thine,

Mortimer.

The next was written on the 26th of July. The verses appeared in *Punch* of July 10th.

MY DEAR CAMPKIN,—Thanks for your pleasant letter: your letters are always pleasant. . . . . We are twelve miles from Burnham Beeches, my friend, and I sometimes walk there and back, and the missus drives and brings a lobster and wine. Will you meet us there? I wrote concerning the grand old trees in *Punch*, and was there on the day my rhymes appeared.

Thine,

MORTIMER COLLINS.

The next was written to Miss L. C., probably in July. It is dated *S. Punch*, but whether that means the anniversary of *Punch*, or simply what Mortimer Collins called his "*Punch* day" in the week, I cannot tell.

S. Punch.

LADY LOUISA,—Nothing to say,
Except that the wind is blowing this way:
'Tis the merry South: on the lawn we sit,
And he steals my pages of wisdom and wit;
And he wakes the limes to a musical roar,
Just like the rush of the sea on the shore.

I'm in love with the South: the North wind freezes,
And the rain comes up with the Western breezes,

And the angry East has a temper that rankles,
But the gay South flutters the ladies' ankles,
And in joyous whisper seems to say,
"Come out, we shall have Love's weather to-day.

Lady Louisa, glad am I,
You are far away by sonorous Wye.
(Y is it called so? Do you know?
'Cause you never know which side you go.
If you look at a map, and its course you try,
Wye looks very much like Y.)

And I hope you'll come to the lawn and limes,
Wholly forgetful of troublesome times,
Gladden'd much by the tranquil rest,
Full of your natural, eager zest,
Our friend who is always loving and true,
Our one Louisa—there couldn't be two.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next is from "Adversaria" of August 7th.

White rats seem the fashion: I don't mean political white rats. I hear of them from all quarters. I bought a couple a day or two ago, and hope to study their peculiarities. Few animals that I have tried are so pretty in their habits, or so charmingly tame. They lie on the palm of a lady's hand and play tricks with

her finger-nails. Their frolics in a cage (the larger the better) are delightful. It is my first introduction to these charming quadrumanous creatures, and I am marvellously pleased with them. Their instinctive tameness and fearlessness are wonderful. When my Pyrenean wolf-hound and a Gordon setter walked up to investigate their cage, they put their pink noses through the wires, and investigated their invaders with no slightest sign of alarm.

CHAPTER IV.

SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER, 1875.

MORTIMER COLLINS'S Pyrenean wolf-hound was so dear a friend to him that I feel justified in quoting verses written to him.

The following were written in September, 1875, and were printed in *Punch* of that month :—

CAUSIDICUS AD CANEM.

My old dog stands by the Temple stairs
  Watching the water's turbid flow,
And he thinks, as the autumn sunlight glares,
  This is a river he ought to know.

He gives a strange, suspicious sniff,
  As he sees the dark stream eddy along,
And dreams of a lazy loitering skiff,
  Of a lover's laugh, of a lady's song.

First drops of a deluge, heavy and warm,
Under Marlow Bridge had driven us three,
And we rock'd in our boat in the thunder storm,
If either grew tired, dear dog, 'twas he.

Ah! the days are here for the straining oars—
The life and the love our toil to crown!
You shall splash, old boy, from the soft green shores
Of a river unsoil'd by London town.

The next I quote is from "Adversaria" of September 4th, when Mortimer Collins was writing on autumn holidays.

In September if a man has got a home, he should stay in it. The Venusian's happy hexameters ring in my ears:—

Hæ latebræ dulces, etiam, si credis, amœnæ,
Incolumem tibi me præstant Septembribus horis.

It seems to me the very time of all the year for home delight. How long the shadows in the brisk fresh morning, when you hear the starling talk wisely on the roof, and see blackbird and thrush searching for the early worm! How sweet the myriad honeysuckles in the green lanes, where the children already search for blackberries! How pleasant the dinner at seven, with lights on the table, yet windows wide open to the lawn! Assuredly I, with Horace, like my own *latebræ*

dulces in September, and shall not easily be tempted away from them.

The next is from the *Loiterer* of September 18th.

Mortimer Collins had been to Wargrave with his Secretary, to see Mr. Edward Draper.

Lovers of the Thames who know Wargrave doubtless remember the sign which was painted by two A.R.A.'s.

I was over at Wargrave a few days ago in search of a friend who loves the Thames; I missed him, so I looked in at Wyatt's, and enjoyed a glass of something refrigerant. The new sign of the "George and Dragon,' painted by two A.R.A.'s who stop at Wargrave is capital. St. George slaying the Dragon is, as it ought to be, heroic; but the other side, St. George's draconic victim lying extinct, and St. George's horse looking gravely on, while St. George himself thirstily quaffs a tankard of bitter ale, is perfectly delightful. It makes one thirsty, which is, of course, exactly what an inn sign ought to do.

The next is a letter to Miss L. C.

From the tone of it, it seems that some of

the neighbours had objected to Mortimer Collins leaning on his gate on Sunday to watch them pass.

S. Matthew.

DEAR LOUISA,—It was cruelly naughty of you not to look in to-day, considering how long a time has passed since we saw you. No: that is not why I lean over my gate on Sundays. There is no study more interesting than to mark the countenances of the various villagers as they go *to* church, and again as they come *from* church: but this is a subject too wide to be treated on paper. At the same time Frances wishes me to say that she *never* (emphatically NEVER) "views the road on a Sunday." She prefers her quiet solitude amid the trees.

If you please, Miss Louisa, we have not got a "drawing-room." We have a book-room, whence there are many ladders of light to that highest sphere in which all mysteries will find solution. And you are coming in "velvet and Samite," are you? Velvet . . . velouette . . . means delicacy and softness. Samite is Greek, pure Greek . . . anything woven with six threads. What can those six threads mean? The six letters of your musical name? or the six days of the week, since we're not to be spoken to o' Sundays?

So Jack has a new collar and chain, and you won't afford yourself one, being "economicable," as a careless friend of Frances's called herself to-day in a letter. But what *do* you want of a new collar and chain? I like the old chain, that binds you to Poet's cottage, and that somebody has broken his teeth in trying to bite through. We don't want to see you in anything new. We want the old Louisa.

When is your birthday? You know why I want to know. What day of the week were you born? You don't know why I want to know that.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next is to Miss L. C., and appears to have been written when the lovers of gossip in the neighbourhood were busier than usual.

October 1, 1875.

DEAR LOUISA,—You will not, I am sure, think me unkind; but it is absolutely impossible for me to yield an iota to what —— calls "the public opinion of the neighbourhood." I should be doubly a coward in doing so; I should betray my own principles and should be treacherous to Frances, who is attacked equally with myself. This would be the case whatever the weight of opinion against me; but in the present instance I feel still more strongly. If, therefore, you are

so persecuted that you feel it requisite to deny us the pleasure of your society, we must submit; but on my own part I can make no concession.

Mr. C—— naturally thinks the whole thing a trifle, and inclines to that compromise which is popular among men of the world.

Much was said when —— called on Saturday that might, perhaps, interest you; but nothing of real value came from him.

It would, you must see, dear Louisa, be impossible for me to give way a hair's breadth in this matter. I do not consider only my position in this village, among people the majority of whom I regard with pity or contempt; I think also of my position in the far wider region of English literature, wherein my name is pretty well known. I should blush to read what I have written on the duty of man to his Maker and his neighbour, if I made any concession to the cowardly insinuations of a scandal-monger.

Ever yours,

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next, from the *Loiterer* of 2nd October, I quote not only because it shows Mortimer Collins's opinion on work, and that he regarded work much more seriously than he appeared to do, but for another reason.

It has been said and even printed that Mortimer Collins was exceedingly fond of society and good living. Any one reading the following would suppose that he was in the habit of dining at a club, and dining well. And there are many more allusions in his articles to the opinions of some friend he met at the club. Now the friend was always his Secretary, *out of whose company he never dined but once for eight years.* The Secretary often found herself put in print as "Syllogisticus," or a friend at the club.

Syllogisticus has just been pitching into me for my remarks on Mr. Newdegate's speech last week. We had been dining quietly at the Chandos Club—the only club in London where you meet men who know a thing or two. . . . . Well, Syllogisticus, having glanced through last week's *Loiterer* somewhat contemptuously, drinks a glass of Lafitte, and opens upon me thus:—

"No happiness but in labour! That's Mr. Newdegate's thesis, and not his alone, but that of men like Lord Derby, who prefers a Blue Book to his father's 'Iliad.' I say that the most perfect happiness is not work, but play; and I also say that men like Mr. Newdegate don't know the meaning of work. They

are doing what they like; that I call play, not work. No man knows what work means unless he lives by it. If I dropped my quill, sir, I should get no dinner. The gentlemen who lecture on labour, and whose dinner is safe, cannot understand that. They can stop when they are tired. I have had to work till my brain would move no longer, and I sank on my bed insensible, with a terrible illness before me; that's work, if you will. *Laborare est orare*, said the old monks; *Laborare est vita frui*, say the modern lecturers. Both true, within limits. My labour is prayer now, because I am teaching men and women what they would not have learnt without my aid. My labour is life-enjoyment now because I am not working in absolute dread of starvation, which has been my lot; but I repeat that the man born to affluence, whatever he achieves by voluntary industry, never works at all. He does good, doubtless; he can be no more said to work than a polo-player, or Grace on the cricket-field, or Dr. Pusey when he sits down to chess with a competent opponent. It is only play. The test of *work* is—Do you live by it? Unless you do, I defy you to understand the real feelings of a working-man. I hate work; I specially hate the only kind of work that I find pays. But one must live, you know. . . . . Waiter, another bottle of that Lafitte!"

The next paragraph refers to Mr. Oswald

Crawfurd, the Consul for Oporto, who had in the autumn of 1875 paid a visit to Poet's Cottage.

The *World* tells us that John Latouche, the traveller in Portugal, is John Dangerfield, who commenced a novelette in that periodical last week. He is also, as Archibald Banks, one of the pleasantest country essayists of these days; and he is, moreover, in his own name, Oswald Crawfurd, a gentleman who has commenced his literary career with an easy brilliancy which I should envy, if to envy were possible. But it is not, and I can enjoy the work of an able man without hating him for being abler than I am—can delight in the beauty and wit of a lovely woman without wanting to run away with her.

The next is to Mr. Townshend Mayer. Lord Lyttelton (whose handwriting was very illegible, wrote to Mortimer concerning the article in the *St. James's Magazine* called "The Rugby Rebellion."

When the Bishop of Exeter made his charges against Dr. Hayman he said,—

It would be natural on leaving I should recommend

my successor to the parents who consult me confidentially, but as an honest man I am unable to do so.

Mortimer Collins in writing on this had quoted this sentence in this way,

. . . "but as an honest man (*sic*)"

Lord Lyttelton wrote to know what he meant by this. Mortimer said he thought it strange that a Bishop should find it necessary to use such an expression, as it was understood that a Bishop must be an honest man.

A rather long correspondence was kept up with Lord Lyttelton on the subject, in fact till within a very short period of his lordship's death, but no copy of Mortimer Collins's letters was made.

October, 1875.

DEAR RALPH,—I have received a long letter from Lord Lyttelton, which I enclose to you, and hope you may be able to read it. I haven't yet succeeded; but I wrote a brief note to say that if I found his criticism required any change in my statements it should (with your editorial permission) be made. I also referred to his question ("What does *sic* mean?" p. 520) and

told him that no gentleman and *à fortiori* no Bishop should parade his honesty to the public. You see his rather weak reply. The question is whether in Olla it would be well to notice his letter.

Gertrude's new story begins as prettily as a story could, and is worthy of her light hand. You shall have more pigeons, my friend: we (the Missus that is) have eaten only four this week. We have had Oswald Crawfurd down here, and found him charming.

à e i

MORTIMER COLLINS.

The next is to Mr. Townshend Mayer.

October, 1875.

DEAR RALPH,—The Felstead School Scandal might be worthy of a paragraph in Olla, as showing how the Rugby affair has demoralized Trustees. *Times* of September 22nd contained a long letter thereon, signed Hardcastle: and to-day there is one from Grignon, the expelled Head-master. It is a vile case. Of course it is too late to notice this month, but it should be noticed.

Our love to you and Gertrude. How are you? The Missus is getting well, but I am swearing at a sore throat, and trying to cure it with tarragon—not the vinegar.

Ever yours,

MORTIMER COLLINS.

The next is a pretty little bit from "Adversaria," where some of the poet's favourite trees, which he set himself, are mentioned. And then he lovingly addresses his readers for whom he had written so long, and for whom he was not to write much longer. There were many people who knew him only as *Cœcilius*, the writer of "Adversaria," and wrote pleasant letters to him.

"The dulness of the present autumn is really portentous. As I write I look out on a lime-shaded lawn, washed by the ever-descending deluge. It is pretty, but very chilly. The limes are tinged with yellow; a copper-beech burns opposite with colours indescribable; blackbirds, and song-thrushes, and missel-thrushes are making fine meals upon worms, and talking to each other musically. But the water is running down the paths, and I fear all the flavour will be washed out of my medlars. This is distinctly weather in which one must make one's own sunshine. Happy the man who has a loving wife and faithful friends—the best materials for that manufacture.

"And, dear reader, who has faithfully accompanied me through long columns of "Adversaria" for many a long year, dost thou not find that this pluvious weather produces much newspaper stupidity? The duller the weather the duller the writer."

The friends referred to in the next paragraph were Mr. Campkin (the Antiquary), the Librarian of the Reform Club, and Mr. Littleton Hay (the Wanderer).

"Two friends, whom I will call the Antiquary and the Wanderer, came to see me on Saturday last, and greatly interfered with my literary work. I begin with an apology to that great potentate the Editor for being behind my time. . . . There were days when I was a Londoner as well as a Loiterer. I know my London now as well as any man living, but I prefer the country. What I like is to get my London friends to visit me, and bring the airy memories of the town, the latest wit and wisdom of the clubs. It is very charming, over a wood-fire, with a good cigar, to listen to the newest news and wittiest wit.

The Antiquary and the Wanderer, who had not met before, and whose ages differed by a year or two, got on together excellent well. As to the Antiquary, he and I never met without a friendly fight on politics.

. . . . My friend the Wanderer has been tramping through Hampshire and Wiltshire. I like a tramp of that kind, but am too busy to attempt it, and my numerous admirers have not yet offered me a two-horse omnibus to give me an autumnal tour. I have walked through most of England's counties, and written descriptions of many of my walks. . . . . The

Wanderer was very savage about Stonehenge. He went there to enjoy a look at the grand old mysterious monument, and behold Joseph Arch was there holding a mutinous meeting. So a wayfarer who desired to study in quiet a marvellous monument of the past, was foiled by a "fool with a circumbendibus," as Coleridge has it, who was talking frightful nonsense to a lot of working men. If this Arch is to emit platitudes, surely he might choose some place fitter than the noblest and most mysterious of those ancient monuments which Parliament finds it so difficult to protect."

The next I quote from "Adversaria" of 30th October. The giver of the rare volume was Mr. Campkin.

"A dear friend of mine, who knows I love old books if they are worth anything, has just given me a copy of Martial published at Zurich in 1544, and bound in oak with clasps. It is in a delightful italic type. There's a treasure for you, O bibliophilist! The oak binding is a perfect piece of art, tooled with the care of those ancient days. . . . Martial went over the same ground pretty often; but he was the mirror of Imperial Rome, and his record of that age is most valuable to all who study history. Few men know Martial thoroughly, he is so various. He was in my judgment a good fellow and a great satirist. To satirize the Rome of Domitian

he was compelled of course to write what is unfit for boys and girls to read.

I transcribe the Horatian lines which the giver of that unique Martial put on the fly-leaves. They flatter me, but they are too good to omit.

> Cæcilius! take this tome as tribute true,
> 'Tis rendering unto Cæsar Cæsar's due;
> For, if the best books should be his who best
> Can use them, this should surely bear your crest,
> To you its mighty strains—to me all mute—
> Are musical as is Apollo's lute!
> Since Zurich's press sent this brave volume forth
> Three hundred years and thirty Mother Earth
> Hath added to her tale: while centuries
> Eighteen have lapsed since Martial oped his eyes
> And, with his scorpion thong, essay'd to lash
> The vices, follies of his age. No flash
> Of summer lightning his stern verse illumes,
> But with Olympian bolts he smites, consumes.
> Thus he whose lightest line's a thunder stroke
> Fit armour finds in panoply of oak.

And a grand old panoply of oak it is, and I ask you, gentle reader, could friendly verse be more charming, more enjoyable?

Mortimer Collins wrote the following answer to Mr. Campkin's verses:—

CAMPKIN! dear friend, your Martial is divine,
And strong the music of your sounding line:
Marcus Valerius Martialis might
Thank you himself for judging him aright,
E'en tho' within his fields of epigram
You wander not. Yet very sure I am,
If you had pass'd the heavy Latin gates,
Too often open'd for mere addlepates,
You would have been at home, and felt the fire
Of the great masters of the Roman lyre.
You might have been more learned, I surmise,
But not more friendly, Campkin, not more wise,
Nor could you say to friend a pleasant thing
In silver verse of more sonorous ring.
Thanks for your Martial: 'tis of books a flower,
And I shall waste on it full many an hour.
Oak fitly binds such book, I hold it true;
For English heart of oak I come to you.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES COLLINS.

Mr. Littleton Hay sent a present of game in October, and also some writing-paper of Pirie's make. The following letter in verse was sent as thanks:—

DEAR LITTLETON HAY,—'Tis a very queer day,
There's nought in the sky to inspire us,

And yet I must really have something to say
Concerning some matters that travel this way,
Perdices atque Papyrus.

Magistra, you know, is a lover of game—
Such food does not easily tire us;
So I send you a trifle of rhyme in her name,
To thank you for courteously sending the same,
And also for Pirie's Papyrus.

And before the bright autumn has burnt itself dead,
Write a rhyme to the Clerk of the Weather,
And implore him to let us, while beech leaves are red,
Ere the voyaging daughters of Procne are fled,
Have a few hours of sunshine together.

The next is part of a letter to Miss L. C., written in November.

Mortimer's novel "Sweet and Twenty" was not reviewed in a famous paper because the Editor did not approve of the heroine climbing trees. Mortimer Collins used to ask all his lady friends if they had ever climbed trees, and was delighted when he heard they had. On this occasion he seems to have asked Lady E—— the question.

You have shot a golden shaft of sunshine through

our life. You sometimes write of what we have done for you: but by the law of humanity all benefit is reciprocal, and what you do for another that other returns to you. If you find this a dark saying, come when there is sunshine, and I'll explain it. We had a call from Lady E—— this afternoon, and she says she has much enjoyed life *up a tree.*

Yours, wherever you are, and
Whatever you do,
MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next is to Mr. Townshend Mayer.

November 21, 1875.

DEAR RALPH,—Ain't it fine opening a hamper from a friend? We had THREE! by Jove, yesterday evening, and didn't we ransack them with curiosity. One had come from our Doctor, who, you see, understands medicine; and the other had feminine frippery and ornaments, and delicate edibles from a fair friend of the Missus's. As to yours, it was Editorial Olla, and no mistake. How Louis was delighted with the eggs. There were such a lot of things that I can't remember them in detail.

I have read your story, and like it. If it's true, as the Missus says, that you wrote it before you left the nursery, it's a wonderful product of genius. Beats Mozart, who didn't manage an oratorio till he was five,

which must be considered elderly. I should like to know the facts. I can't quite guess how it got into a Church Magazine, but perhaps the editor cut out the pious parts to use in his own sermons. If so, doubtless the sermons and the story were improved.

Horne is wonderful. I don't think I ever read through *Orion*, and I have quite forgotten it. But *Marlowe* recalls the "Mighty line" of Marlowe himself. I am really thankful to you for sending me that—as also for the bound *St. James's*, of which your volume looks charming. Love from us both to "Gertie," and don't let her work too hard: but the Missus will write.

Hope our namesakes are well. Do they breed? That reminds me, our white rats had a litter of six about five weeks back, and a day or two ago another litter of ten! Here's a go. Rats enough for a county. *Have a few?*

Thine,

MORTIMER.

In the parcel from Mr. Townshend Mayer, alluded to in the last letter, a half-crown was sent to pay the carriage. The coin was returned to Mrs. Townshend Mayer with the following verses:—

You sent us, Gertie, half-a-crown,—
To keep it we're unwilling:

The carriage of your goods from town
Cost [really] not a shilling.

"Returning coin!" sly Ralph will say,
The notion is a droll one,
"A *half*-crown too!" I hope some day
That Fame may give a whole one.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

Miss M. A. and C. S., when they visited the Cottage, brought with them some eschalots which they had grown and pickled themselves. Mortimer Collins found them so good that he wished for more, and wrote the following nonsense to beg for them:—

Fair sisters for whom Moonface trots
To covert sides and picnic spots,
Can you not spare some more shalots?

Had I the pen of Dr. Watts,
Who wrote of lovely songs such lots,
How I'd immortalize shalots!

Close to the cosiest of cots
They grow in pleasant garden plots,
Margaret and Clara's rare shalots.

Better than pines or bergamots,
When pickled well in green glass pots,
Are the divine doll's-house shalots.
MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

In November a couple of stories, which together made three volumes, were published. "Blacksmith and Scholar" and "From Midnight to Midnight."

The first carried out one of Mortimer Collins's favourite theories, that it is possible for a gentleman to do manual work without being degraded.

I will quote a few lines where the author, in his usual way, talks to the reader.

In quoting Juvenal's remark,—

Nil habet infelix paupertas durius in se,
Quam quod ridiculos homines facit,

he says,—

I do not know whether any scholiast has pointed out, what probably is obvious to most students, that Juvenal would not have said of *Vir*, the man at his acme, the hero, what he says of *homo*, a mere male animal *ex humo*. A true man of the highest class

cannot be rendered ridiculous by poverty. An ordinary man becomes ridiculous when his coat is out at elbow, or even when, after having drunk much champagne, untoward circumstances reduce him to bitter ale.

I quote this because it shows a point in Mortimer Collins's character. Poverty did not make him ridiculous.

In another place he talks to the reader about great rivers. He says,—

A great river is a Divine gift to men. Its power, its continuity, its tranquil movements are lessons to the wanderer by its margin. No wonder the Greeks deified their rivers. I shall be told that rivers must necessarily flow downward according to the law of gravitation. True, O scientist! but whose hand binds the spheres together, and guides the streams to the sea? Law is excellent; analyze it, calculate it, show that it varies by the square or cube, as may be; but remember that behind law lies power, and that the wonderful beauty and simplicity of nature's rules show them to be Divine. When man succeeds, he is devoutly imitative. The Eddystone Lighthouse had disaster after disaster, till the idea occurred to an imaginative builder to imitate the oak in its structure. I suspect the aëronautic art will not be perfected until the flight of birds is more carefully studied. And I firmly

believe that speed in steamships should be obtained by the method which makes the lobster the swiftest of the sea's inhabitants. When in a hurry he swims backwards, his tail, as he rises and falls, grasping the water. You may see prawns in an aquariam do the same if they are frightened. Now I take it that all these curious mechanic powers conferred on the lower creatures are lessons to men. Similarly I believe that no plant grows which has not special nutrition or medicinal power—that there is no animal without definite use. This planet is a perfectly contrived machine, with no screw loose anywhere, designed simply for the education of man. Any one who thoroughly grasps this truth, cannot pass a moment, or walk a yard without feeling that the world is full of life, and that what seems mysterious will in time be simple enough. Finite folk are we, with infinite possibilities.

In another place, describing a sunrise, he writes,—

Between the islands lay pink paths of beauty, faint reflex of the glowing East, as if the waters had blushed beneath the tread of angels flying to tell the world that God had given it another day. How the believers in annihilation ought to cherish every day God gives them—ought to pray for the next!

Robert Fitzroy stood silent, feasting his eyes on the scene below him. He felt that it was a luxury to live. He uttered no word; but thanks to God for the beauty of the visible world and the health to enjoy it went heavenwards, in one of those inaudible whispers which the Recording Angel always sets down when more ceremonious prayers escape his attention.

The following was written to Mr. R. H. Horne in November :—

DEAR MR. HORNE,—Many thanks for "Cosmo de Medici," which came this morning, and which I can see, from reading a few scenes here and there, is a very strong drama.

I greatly admire the first of the short poems, the dialogue between Franklin and his lieutenant; and suppose, after all, Lady Franklin was right in her intuition, and he still lives! I sometimes think it within the limits of possibility. I enclose a curiosity unearthed by me in the course of preparing an article on almanacs for the new Quarterly. Gives this no hope?

Faithfully yours,

MORTIMER COLLINS.

The next was written to Miss L. C. in December :—

DEAR LOUISA,—Your letter gave me intense pleasure, for it showed me that you understand what I consider to be the relation between us. But do not imagine, because I claim to have done much for you, that I am not well aware that you also have done much for me. The gardener who brings up a lovely flower is grateful to the flower for being lovely. The very first day I saw you—long before I knew you, or dreamt I should know you—I felt that I longed to know you. And during the years that have passed, the pleasure you have given me is beyond power of words. In dull and weary times, which come to the strongest of us, the word "Louisa" has charmed me. I feel, after all that has occurred, that our friendship is immortal. I had forgotten what you said about the wickedness of worshipping intellect; of course, it would be wicked. There is only One to worship and to love, Chief of all. I should grow very weary of life if I did not feel that I had God for friend. *Intellect* is merely Latin for *insight:* the man who sees God and the world best is the most intellectual.

MORTIMER.

Mortimer Collins very often amused himself by sending acrostics on post-cards to his friends, or any small matter that he wanted to say on a post-card he would put in verse. Just one

specimen of this may be interesting. Miss C. S. left her thimble at the Cottage, and a post-card with the following lines was sent to her, in December :—

> Dearest Clara, has your nimble
> Finger miss'd its silver thimble?
> Pay for this advertisement,
> And the thimble shall be sent.
> What's the payment for that same?
> Letters four do form its name.

The lady chose to misunderstand what was wanted in four letters, and sent the following reply on a post-card :—

> Letters four there are in *gold*,
> Too much for a thimble old;
> Bring it to me, sir, and you
> Shall receive what is your due.

Mortimer then replied on a post-card,—

> My first is what I want; my second
> The mean reward on which you reckon'd.

I.

You're fond of its contents, I know.

II.

She for her crimes was taught to low.

III.

This fills my first with little trouble.

IV.

This helps to blow a radiant bubble.

The lady sketched the answers to this on a post-card.

I have quoted this little post-card correspondence to show one of Mortimer Collins's ways of amusing himself and his friends.

He wrote a large number of acrostics in this fashion.

I think I have before mentioned that Mortimer Collins wrote New Year's letters to his friends. As he did not live another year it may be interesting to some people to read all those written on the last day of 1875. They are simply trifles, all thrown off in one afternoon;

but I cannot help thinking it shows great kindness of heart and singularity of character, that a man working as Mortimer did, could still take the world so pleasantly, and find time to think of his friends in this way. Each piece is so exactly suited to the character of the person to whom it was written.

The first is to Mr. C. D., who was on the Coal Exchange, and whose visits to Knowl Hill had been less frequent during the year.

DEAR CHARLIE,—We wish you a happy New Year,
And hope you will come down much oftener here;
Poetic and Cornish, we think it a pity
You should lose your old natural fun in the City,
And sink, 'mong the herd of the sordid young "fellas,"
With the shiniest hats and the smallest umbrellas.
You might give up your stunning swell dinners sometimes
To hear the soft summer susurrus of limes;
And list while the Muses their melody trill,
As if 'twere Parnassus, though only Knowl Hill.
Come oftener, old fellow, and show you've a soul,
A diamond of wit 'mid the grime of the coal.

Remember 'tis leap year, and be on your guard,
Since the damsels are licensed to plead pretty hard.

Farewell! don't get spoilt in the quest after wealth;
At midnight, dear Charlie, we'll drink your good health.
MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next is to Mr. H. F., a publisher of Bibles and Prayer Books, who had during the year brought out Prayer Books with chains, that they might be carried at a lady's waist.

A Happy New Year, my dear Harry,
As 'tis Leap Year you're certain to marry.
Read the service, and find out what's what,
In the splendidest prayer-book you've got.
But though you've an ecclesiac bias,
Fight shy of the girl that's too pious,
That on saints' days has singular whims,
And likes to be shrill in the hymns.

* * * * *

On many a feminine waist
With chains you a prayer-book have placed;
Egad, it is only your due
The book should chain some one to you.
Farewell, and accumulate wealth;
At midnight we'll drink your good health.
MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next is to the Librarian of the Reform

Club. The "unusual gold" refers to a testimonial presented to him by members of the Club.

DEAR CAMPKIN,—In your studious room recluse,
Will you, I wonder, wish us at the deuce
For wasting your invaluable time
With this frivolity of New Year rhyme?
No matter: Knowl Hill's rhymer wishes well
To the renown'd Librarian of Pall Mall:

Wishes right heartily that, as the Old,
So the New Year may bring unusual gold;
And wishes you fair leisure by and by,
To dally with your archæology,
And cut a gem or two of poetry.

We drink your health this midnight, you and yours:
And 'twixt us all the friendship that endures.
MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next is to Mortimer Collins's medical adviser and friend. He had sent a barrel of oysters to the Cottage at Christmas.

DEAR BYRON,—A Happy New Year to you!
And if we were rather more near to you,

We'd clink our three glasses together,
And laugh at the faults of the weather.

This year your kind gifts have been numerous,
Next year come yourself and be humorous;
We prefer our dear doctor who roysters,
To even a barrel of oysters;
But we really are not very loth
To give a gay welcome to both.

Be sure you remember, O Byron!
The perils that doctors environ.
Don't annihilate too many patients,
Unless they are wealthy relations;

* * * * *

Farewell and accumulate wealth,
At midnight we'll drink your good health.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The next is to Mr. Littleton Hay. Orion in the second verse was Mr. R. H. Horne, who is often called Orion by his intimate friends, from the name of his epic poem. He was at this time arranging to go to America, and Mortimer Collins applied Tennyson's line to him,—

". . . Orion sloping slowly to the west."

DEAR LITTLETON HAY,—A Happy New Year,
Old-fashion'd the wish, yet we like to renew it,
And we hope it will very oft find you down here
When business allows you to do it.

Don't fall into love you're unable to cure,
If the minxes of Leap Year their little game try on,
Don't worry your brain beyond what 'twill endure,
Else you may have to slope like Orion.

At midnight we drink the Good Health of our friends,
And you're 'mong the group we shall warmly remember,
A sunrise of hope and of pleasure it blends
With the chill dying hours of December.

The next is to Mrs. G. S. The joke about respectability consists in the meaning attached to the word by Mrs. G. S.

DEAR JOSEPHINE,—We wish you both
A Happy Year of quiet pleasure,
Through married love which is not loth
To give fair gifts beyond all measure.
The Future shall be as the Past,
An even life and unambitious,
Believe me, child, the joys that last
Reach not the vain and avaricious.

At midnight we shall drink your Health,
And, to the best of our ability,
Wish you sufficing peace and wealth,
But not too much "respectability."
Perhaps you'll see a joke in this—
Forgive a scribbler of romances,
And take a New Year's letter-kiss
From MORTIMER
and also
FRANCES.

The last is to Miss Louisa C., and is perhaps quite a gem in its way.

Lady, brave and frank and dear,
Happy be thy coming year,
May its vernal zephyrs blow
Far away the breath of foe!
May its pure calm summer air
Bring a life more calm and fair,
And sweet music of the birds
Banish slander's strident words!
May it when rich autumn ends,
And the last red leaf descends,
Know that we are still true friends.

Change the chords, and let us mix
Fun with pathos. Seventy-six

Is bissextile, lady fair—
Lovers list to maiden's prayer—
Cupid is a girl this year.
Have you not a thrill of fear
That her arrow harm may do
To an Artemis like you?

When we drink your Midnight Health
As the old year vanisheth,
As we hear his dying breath,
We shall wish you *Love*, not *Wealth*.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

CHAPTER V.

JANUARY AND FEBRUARY, 1876.

MORTIMER COLLINS and his Secretary had often talked of writing a novel together, in which the scene should be laid in their village, and many of the village characters drawn. They had now put together all the materials for this story, which they called "The Village Comedy," and they agreed to commence at the moment that the New Year came in. This they did, Mortimer writing the following Sonnet, which he intended for the motto of the first chapter, but which the Secretary ruled out as being inappropriate.

Gone is the irrecoverable year,
With all its joy and trouble. January
Begins, and we, with courage gay and airy,

Begin a novel. It is pleasant here:
The midnight fire burns frostily and clear;
Soul prompting Fantasy, the frolic fairy,
The poet's guide through regions of vagary,
Shows the vague sea o'er which we have to steer.
The Hero comes into our haunted room,
We see the lovely Lady's passionate grief,
As some foul scandal her fair bosom stirs;
The plausible Villain grins amid the gloom;
Then follow to our infinite relief
A motley multitude of villagers.

Mortimer Collins writes in the *Loiterer* of January the 1st, as follows:—

A well-known writer is good enough to thank me for certain points in my loiterings, and I hereby reciprocate his appreciation. As a fact the commonwealth of letters would be a great power in England if men of letters were less jealous and more ready to be *bon camarade*. So when a strange hand is held out to grasp mine, faith, I like it. We are all working together; if we don't quite agree with each other's ways of work, the end is clear. What do we want? The poetry of life. We leave its prose to millionaires.

This appreciation of others and freedom from

jealousy was a great point in the literary character of Mortimer Collins.

In the *Loiterer* of the 8th he writes,—

A gentleman of high standing and rare accomplishments remarked in conversation some time ago, that "literary men are best at a distance." I believe he is fond of a paradox. At the same time he may have had reason for what he said. There are literary men who contrive to make themselves offensive in general society. There is the man of real genius, never thoroughly accepted by the public, who revenges himself by caustic epigram at the dinner-table. There is the man to whom anything which can be caricatured is irresistible, and who puts all his acquaintances into novels with the slight disguise of names, a practice which cannot be too severely reprobated. There is the man who cannot tolerate average folly, and comes down with sledge-hammer force upon any one who talks nonsense. There is the youthful poetaster who likes to recite his love-lyrics to young ladies, when they would far prefer some gayer amusement with some less conceited young gentleman. In ordinary society, I concede that all these people, and more that I could indicate, are intolerable bores. Perhaps the *Ursus Maximus* of letters was dear old Samuel Johnson, yet had no man heartier friends, and he was well beloved by S^{l}r Joshua Reynolds, the

most courteous and elegant of men. Genius has its drawbacks. It is believed that Shakespeare occasionally drank too much; it is certain that Pope libelled ladies and played ungentlemanly tricks. One would rather have the faults—not to mention the genius—of William Shakespeare than of Alexander Pope. However, the fact is that the Man of Letters can only be understood by the most highly civilized society, such as that of Athens in the days of Pericles, by Rome in those of Augustus. I suppose neither Mr. Gladstone nor Mr. Disraeli would maintain that he is the equal of Mæcenas, and it is certain that no King of England since Henry VIII, has been equal to Augustus Cæsar. But look at Horace's familiar verses to the Minister? look at Virgil's easy letters to the Emperor? Mæcenas wrote uncommonly bad verse, and would probably have translated Homer as weakly as Mr. Gladstone; but he knew good poetry when he saw it, and he knew how to reward and encourage a poet.

If Horace had lived in England he would have had a paltry pension of fifty pounds, instead of a country estate on which he could live as a gentleman without a care and devote his power to the benefit of Rome.

In January Mortimer Collins wrote,—

The well-known firm of Cope, in Liverpool, issue a monthly periodical styled "Cope's Tobacco Plant."

Therein I wrote eight lines of rhyme, warning young ladies against smoking cigarettes. This brought me in return a mighty Christmas box—a box of a thousand cigarettes! Verily this will be a great boon to a good many friends: not often do I smoke myself. Verse at one hundred and twenty-five cigarettes a line is remunerative.

The next I quote is from the *Loiterer* of January 15th,—

"The mesmerizer snow." Charming phrase that of Browning's. Snow is mesmerizing us at this moment —casting a strange misty feeling over the world. The east wind drives the sharp white shower along the road outside my lawn. I leave that east wind to its own devices. I get out some old books, put chestnuts to roast on the bars, ask my *placens uxor* to mull some claret in the etna, with sugar and cinnamon, and loiter in my bookroom instead of loitering out of doors. And looking at the poem wherein Mr. Browning uses that magical phrase, in the edition of 1863 I am carried back a dozen years or so, with numerous recollections. *Tempus edax rerum* is a great saying. Was that the year of Beale and the Park-palings? I know that I was staying at Hatchett's in Piccadilly, in the famous year of riot, and had, with a friend, to fight my way home through a multitude of roughs. But on reflection, it

was later, that ridiculous row, for Lord Palmerston died in 1865, and we were forcing our way home from the club which has set up its quarters in the pleasant house of the cheery descendant of Leofric and Godgifu.

The next is from the *Loiterer* of the same date. Mortimer Collins's books which the Secretary has around her consist of about a thousand well-chosen volumes, which are perhaps somewhat like Charles Lamb's books in being shabby and well-used. Many of them contain autograph letters from their authors placed in the fly-leaves, or letters from eminent men.

I preserve all correspondence that is worth anything, and gum it into the books of its writers or of those whom it concerns. So I have a pleasant series of autograph letters in my books. I mean to leave them to the Plymouth Cottonian Library when I pass into another part of the universe, seeing that Plymouth is my birthplace, and that I have excellent reasons for delighting in the soldierly and erudite family of Cotton.

The Secretary belonged to the Cotton family. Mr. R. H. Horne (Orion) was a visitor at the

Cottage at Christmas time, and one evening, while playing the guitar, he suddenly stopped because Mortimer was not attending. Mortimer promised to be more attentive, and when the music commenced again he wrote a sonnet, which seemed to take only five minutes in the composition. Perhaps he had thought it out while apparently inattentive. This sonnet was printed in the *Loiterer*, with the following remark by Mortimer Collins:—

Here is a sonnet, written when Orion was playing his guitar, which may perchance be worth the printer's trouble in setting up.

O dreamer of Orion! Back again
Thou hast return'd from the far southern life,
The glory and the suffering and the strife,
A wondrous burial, but not in vain.

For thou bring'st home to us the ancient strain,
And our small school with poetasters rife
Shudders at satire cutting like a knife,
Wonders at music diamonds dropp'd like rain.

I love the echo of thine ancient youth
I love thy second youth, o'erfill'd with power.
I love the joyous tone of thy guitar.

Revive, O Poet, full of strength and truth !
Astonish rhymers of a weaker hour !
We hail the radiance of thy evening star.

"Orion" replied on his guitar, the words and music improvised. I did not make a note of the words, but I remember they commenced, "O Quinbus Flestrin ! Quinbus Flestrin," being the name Orion applied to Mortimer because of his great size.

The next is from the *Loiterer* of January 22. Mortimer Collins was once the Editor of the *Plymouth Mail*, and Mr. Latimer was the editor of the chief Liberal paper. Thus they were political enemies. Mortimer Collins could hit very hard, but in private life he was always ready to shake hands with his political antagonist.

"The animosities perish; the humanities are eternal;" I cherish that great saying of Christopher North's, the Sir Launcelot of literature, "the kindest man that ever struck with sword." I am agreeably reminded of it by a passage in Monday's *Western Daily Mercury*, the leading Liberal journal of my native town, the Queen of the West. It is a pleasant comment on

that passage in the *Loiterer*, wherein I state that I shall leave my little book-store to the Plymouth Cottonian Library. It specially refers to the gift-books from friends who know that I am fond of literature matured by age. I had mentioned Conrad Gesner's oak-bound Martial of 1544, and the erudite Marcellus Malpighius of 1687. The editor of the *Mercury* and I had many a rapier fight over politics in days half forgotten, so quickly move events, and when Mr. Latimer thus offers his ungauntleted hand in knightly fashion to his old opponent, I gladly do likewise, and thank him heartily for his hope that it will be long before Plymouth gets my little legacy.

Seeing how soon after this the end came, this last sentence reads very sadly.

Mortimer Collins often received anonymous letters concerning his writings. Some one seems to have been very angry with the *Loiterer* which I quoted a few pages back, and to have written an angry letter thereon. I quote from the *Loiterer* of February 5.

The *Loiterer* has met with a congenial critic, and is happy. That critic says that he takes for himself and his family eight copies weekly of this paper, and is

therefore in my opinion a thoroughly wise man. If I venture to controvert any of his strictures, it is with diffidence and humility. I am but a Loiterer; he is Aristarchus. He says my egotism is most offensive: that I am always talking about my eating and drinking: that I have positively ventured to solace myself in the wintry weather with roasted chestnuts and mulled claret. "Because thou art virtuous shall there be no more cakes and ale?" I confess the chestnuts and claret, and heartily wish the latter had been Chateau Lafitte, which it was not by any means. My kind critic proceeds to object to my having a lawn before my house, but I can assure him it is a very little one. If it were larger I might ask him to come and smoke a cigar upon it; but I feel certain, from his splendid style, that he would dwarf it utterly, as if he were Captain Lemuel Gulliver in the city of Lilliput. Further, he remarks that I am in a state of quiet but continuous "brag" (elegant word!), and that I consider myself "better off and wiser than the rest of the world!" This is delightful. I confess to being much worse off than most folk—and certainly than my critic, whose style and logic must have made his fortune long ago—for when I manage to make both ends meet, it is by a pretty strong tug at the rope.

But "wiser!" Nay, this is hard, I am but a Loiterer in the byways of literature. If I may not taste the fount of Parnassus, at least I may hear its immortal

murmur. I know well where the wise men go. They haunt the Stock Exchange; they write M.P. after their names; they spend more on a single banquet than I on the modest dinners of a year; I envy them not. The children of this world are wise in their generation. My kind critic, who takes eight copies of this journal, and therefore claims a right to apply a cat-o-nine-tails to my shoulders, is one of the wise. O Sapientia! There were wise men in Greece, and there also were wise men in Gotham: and perchance the great saying of the Lacedæmonian sage might be worth my critic's study.

It may here be remarked that it is quite impossible to write much, or indeed to be in any way much before the public, without annoying somebody. You utter a free opinion without an idea that it will be taken as a personal insult by some one who thinks differently.

I never could understand the temper of mind which induces a man to say "You believe the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, and therefore you are a scoundrel and a wretch, and have not paid your washerwoman for years." But there are such delightfully illogical people wandering about; I charitably hope that my amiable critic is not one of them. And I hereby thank him for his epistle, which amused me greatly as I loitered with three dogs as comrades up and down the lawn he so despises. I hope he will not be angry that I laughed just a little.

On Valentine's Day a case of wine arrived from Messrs. Wace, with instructions that it was ordered to be sent by Sir William Clayton as a valentine. The following reply was sent to Sir William :—

My dear Sir William . . . Thanks for wine:
Truly no choicer Valentine
Could come in February.
When thrush and merle do sing and pair,
And something stirs in softer air,
Which makes the ardent youngsters dare
To conjugate *Amare*.

The pale straw-tinted Liebfraumilch
Deserves its baptism; soft as silk
Yet full of strength I know it:
While Chambertin, imperial wine,
Is full of energy divine,
And makes a poetaster shine
As radiant as a poet.

'Twas friendly to remember us:
A pleasant gift, well chosen thus,
Speaks wisdom in the giver.
When Valentine comes round again
May perfect health and pleasure reign
Amid your beautiful demesne,
Beside the royal river.

M. AND F. C.

The usual number of Valentines were written this year. The first is to Miss Louisa C.

VALENTINE, 1876.

The owl may hoot, the bat may hiss,
Yet doves will coo, and sweethearts kiss:
I do not deem the deed amiss—
What say you, lady mine?
O mellow ouzel, sparkling thrush,
Now let your rich love-music gush!
Soar lark, and with thy torrent-rush
Awake St. Valentine!

Grows many a noxious poison-weed
In ditch from foulness never freed,
But why such venom was decreed
I care not to divine.
Content am I with fragrant flowers
Uprising after softest showers—
Dim violets that deck thy bowers,
O gay St. Valentine!

The felon fog of Slander may
Brood upon earth for many a day:
A sudden swift destroying ray!
And Truth's strong sun will shine.

Our love is pure, our sky is blue,
We dread no mist, my Lady Loo,
So this fair morning, I and you,
We'll greet St. Valentine.

MORTIMER.

The next is to Miss M. A. S. The first line is taken from her answer to Mortimer's Valentine of the previous year.

"Who's this comes riding o'er the snow?"
'Tis Margaret's sweetheart well I know,
With bold bright eye and cheeks aglow,
Disdaining weather.
Keen hail may meet him on his way,
And fierce fork'd lightning zigzag play,
He swears it is a summer day
When you're together.

Pray who is he, fair Margaret,
Whom you have caught in Love's light net?
I guess you'll give no answer yet
I'll not importune.
Ev'n if you say his Valentine
Is twenty times as nice as mine,
I'm not the fellow to repine
At his good fortune.

The next is to Miss C. S.

Clara, here's St. Valentine!
Coronal of myrtle twine
In your soft dark tresses.
Do I dream, or is it true,
Cupid flies the bright air through,
Laden with caresses?

From his mother's islet soft
See the urchin shoots aloft,
Like a white bird wending
Over ocean, flying fast
Till he finds his home at last,
On Doll's House descending.

Do not drive the imp away;
Time it is you felt his sway,
And for reason weighty,
Leap Year, when the ladies reign,
Clearly will not come again
Until 1880.

The next is to Mrs. G. S.

Gay as ever comes the Spring,
Josephine!
Merle and mavis 'gin to sing,
Boughs between;

Yellow primrose, violet blue,
Leaves and moss are peeping through;
Soon the bare boughs will renew
Tender green.

Springs may come and Springs may go,
Lady mine!
Love's eternal, well you know,
Love's divine.
Brighter glows his purple wing
Every time the jocund Spring
Doth, to greet you, gaily bring
Valentine.

The next is to Mrs. I. V.

Dear Mrs. Vizetelly,
I'm not profound like Shelley,
I haven't Swinburne's passion,
That people think so fine;
My rhymes are light and airy,
And fit for February,
And so, in ancient fashion,
I pen a Valentine.

Though girl and boy no longer,
Our friendship may be stronger
Than trivial love romances,
Which youngsters deem divine.

May Fate no more be spiteful,
But bring fair days delightful,
Bright health and happy fancies,
So runs my Valentine!

The next is to Miss M. S. of Caversham, a little lady of fifteen years old, who had not before had a Valentine from Mortimer.

You came, a sprightly apparition,
A very pleasant, piquant vision,
To call the other day,
When I with pain podagral pester'd,
In chimney-corner sat sequester'd,
Expecting nought so gay.

O mirthful maiden, fair home-treasure,
In thanks I wish you health and pleasure,
And happy dreams divine!
Though future verse may touch you nearer,
Believe me none can be sincerer
Than this brief Valentine!

Several Valentines were also written for the Secretary to various old friends. I think I may quote two or three of them. The first is to Mr. C. D., who was on the Coal Exchange, and

whose visits to Knowl Hill were becoming less frequent.

Leap Year, Charlie! Valentine!
Amorous challenge ne'er decline;
Do not let your gallant soul
Shrivel like a lump of coal,
In the City furnace burning,
And to dust too soon returning.

You are in your manly prime,
Take the pleasure of the time;
When your brightest years are spent,
What's the use of cent. per cent.?
Will you shun the vernal air,
Just to be a millionaire?

Credibly 'tis said, in Hades
Coals are plenty, few the ladies;
Do you really wish to range
In that coming Coal Exchange?
No, enjoy existence here—
Troubadour and cavalier!

The next is to Mortimer Collins's cousin, Henry Frowde, the London manager of the Oxford University Press.

HARRY, in Holy Land of Bible
And Book of Prayer,
Of course a Valentine's a libel,
And spoils the air;
And yet one fact that I observe is
That Book contains the Marriage Service.

The vernal signs are tempting, Harry;
'Tis Leap Year too,
When maids who are in haste to marry
Have leave to woo.
Don't bind too fast the nuptial links;
Don't get snapt up by any minx.

So my unprejudiced advice is,
When Valentine
Precipitates the fatal crisis,
Ask leave—that's mine.
I soon shall judge (I am not jealous)
If she deserves the best of fellows.

The next is in the manner of Swinburne, to Mr. Littleton Hay, who was fond of using Swinburnian rhymes and metres.

The season of rashness and rapture,
The season of frolic and fun;
There possibly may be a capture,
My friend, ere that season is done.

You think in your pride you are far less
Prone than others to wander away,
In Lotosland, never cigarless,
O Littleton Hay!

The nymphs of our amorous Swinburne,
The maids of Shakespearian time,
The nymphs who with impulse of sin burn,
The girls who are pure in their prime,
A festival joyous they keep here,
With flowerets their tresses are gay;
For is it not—is it not Leap Year?
O Littleton Hay!

So pause in the midst of tobacco,
And at the wild revelry glance,
And say, *Adjuvente Iaccho*,
I'll certainly join in the dance.
But remember, poetical student,
'Tis Leap Year and Valentine's Day,
And with every maiden be prudent,
O Littleton Hay!

The following letter to Mr. Campkin was written on Feb. 16. The article on Almanacks was in the *New Quarterly* of Jan., 1876. The geometric Valentine was a book of diagrams

by a man who fancied he had arrived at the quadrature of the circle. Mortimer Collins was exceedingly fond of mathematics, and would often work at it for recreation from literary work.

My dear Campkin,—In my verse in the Almanack article (p. 418) "completion" was printed "complexion"!

Even so "anachromont" is typographic English for "anachronism."

Fancy "ycleped"! What an atrocity!

Thanks for your geometric Valentine. I must draw a few diagrams before I can discover where the Canadian speculator is wrong, which of course he must be; and I must wait till I can buy a new pair of compasses, which can't be done out of London.

That —— has not called does not surprise me. He's an odd fish. He thinks himself the centre of the universe. Are all poets like him?

The Missus means to write, so I leave her to answer your questions.

Yours ever,

Mortimer Collins.

CHAPTER VI.

MARCH TO JULY, 1876.

On the 4th of March, Mortimer Collins writes thus in the *Loiterer*:—

I have this week voted by ballot for the first time in my life. I cannot say I like it. The ballot may be a necessity in clubs, very likely—that is a point on which I express no opinion—but in political voting it is, in my judgment, most humiliating. A gentleman who had the same duty to perform told me that when he went through the process of secret voting he felt "a dreadful sneak." That phrase tersely describes the feeling of an Englishman, accustomed to a fair and open encounter, when compelled to vote in the dark, and to conceal the name of the man he votes for. It seems impossible that a system can last which is so abhorrent to all the manlier instincts of our strong and fearless race.

On the 20th of March, just four months

before his death, Mortimer Collins wrote as follows:—

Snow on the vernal equinox with white violets in full bloom. Just seven days later than I noted it six years ago. The seasons do not improve. The old-fashioned summers, when there was

"A strange superfluous glory in the air,"

are memories of the past. When did we last sit on the lawn, day after day, glad of the shadow of full-foliaged trees, stimulated by Apollo's actinic shafts? It seems ages ago. Is Helios growing weary? Does Hertha feel a flagging energy? I fancy not. This is a world of cycles, and periods of fine and bad weather alternate on much the same principle as that which produces Tory and Whig ministries, ritualism and rationalism, striped petticoats and crinoline, good and bad luck at cards. I am an optimist. The longer my ill luck lasts, the more assured am I of a run of good luck. Who waits, wins. When I am ill, I habitually look forward to getting well, and I do it. Some fellows no sooner feel a pain in their little finger than they proclaim their intention to die, and very often fulfil that intention. Of course it is absurd for snow to be persistently falling on the 20th of March, but when I find Gilbert White recording snow late in April, and ice as thick as a crown piece on the 7th of June, 1787, I

conclude that our grandfathers were as badly off as we. And, through the calmly-falling snow, which is rapidly whitening the yews and hollies and laurels, I have a vision of the same lawn in July, when the limes, now leafless, will be sun-proof, and the turf, now snow-covered, will be greener than emerald, softer than velvet. There is a missel-thrush singing riotously through the wild weather, for he is wooing his mate, and the bitter air cannot freeze his lyric force; in July he will be silent, save for sometimes a twitter in morning and evening twilight. Surely he foresees summer, or he could not sing so rarely.

A week later Mortimer Collins wrote again about this same missel-thrush as follows:—

While among the birds, I may remark that all through the wintry weather—from quite the beginning of February—a missel-thrush has been cheering us by continual song. He begins at five in the morning; he sings till seven at night. He has really made me feel as "jolly as a sandboy" (the small shrimp so called that frisks in the maddest way about the sands)—on days almost suicidal. But to-day, turning over Gilbert White, I am reminded that the missel-thrush "is called in Hampshire and Sussex the storm-cock, because his song is supposed to forbode windy, wet weather." Storm-cock, indeed! So my musical friend up in the

naked lime boughs, singing madly from before sunrise to after sunset, only pausing to descend and tug a luckless worm out of the turf, you are a herald of wind and snow, are you? And I have all this while been admiring your cheerfulnes in adverse weather. One learns a little every day.

The following were to Miss Louisa C. on the 1st of April. They were intended to cheer her under the annoyance caused by slanderous gossip:—

He surely is an April Fool
Who does not find this world a school,
Where tasks are often hard, 'tis true—
But there are pleasant lessons too.

He is an April Fool, I ween,
Who cares one whit for spite and spleen,
Since night will always yield to day,
And love can drive small cares away.

He is an April Fool who stays
To sermons sour on summer days;
A wiser soul, refresh'd by prayer,
Will seek the anthems of the air.

He is an April Fool who frets
O'er trivial troubles, vain regrets,

When spring is here with sweet soft weather,
Which loving friends can share together.

But you, to whom this rhyme we write,
Lover of candour, truth, and light,
When worries come keep calm and cool,
Then will you be no April Fool.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

On the 3rd of April Mortimer Collins wrote to the editor of the *Reading Mercury* concerning birds. The letter is worth quoting, as it gives some of Mortimer Collins's observations on the birds in his garden.

SIR,—I read in the local portion of the *Wargrave and Knowl Hill Parish Magazine* certain "Hints for the New Horticultural Committee," which are calculated to alarm the owners of quiet gardens and ornamental trees. The writer suggests that the village boys should make collections of birds' eggs and of curious nests for exhibition at the parochial flower-show. As this is just the period when indiscriminate birds'-nesting does most mischief, I hasten to enter my protest against this recommendation. Boys will be only too glad of clerical authority for breaking through hedges and climbing trees and decimating our song-birds. In

what my friend Mr. Matthew Arnold calls a "bird-haunted English lawn" of less than an acre, close to the high road, I am fortunate enough to watch whole colonies of birds—blackbirds, thrushes, missel-thrushes, starlings, wrens, robins, bullfinches, greenfinches, chaffinches, and many others. The nightingales breed close by in the woods, and have often kept me awake at night with their song. My most illustrious visitors were a pair of fine gross-beaks, which came over in January of 1873, when the weather was bitterly cold. All the guns of the village were out after them, for the cock bird looks as bright as a kingfisher when he flies, but happily they found shelter in some firs in a neighbouring garden, where they brought up a young brood. Finding out that I fed my pigeons with peas, they were my regular guests; the hard food reminded them of their natural pine-kernels. They remained till Easter Monday, when a warm air and a south wind induced them to take flight, probably for Norway. There is, I believe, no other authentic instance of the pine-grossbeak's breeding so far south, although a couple were shot in the Swan Garden at Hall Place many years ago.

My occasional notes on this matter in the *Times* have brought me much pleasant correspondence with lovers of birds, and Admiral Baillie Hamilton and others have expressed their surprise that in so small a space so many birds will congregate. But, like all living creatures, birds soon learn their friends. They

sing as you pass near them. As to the robins, they will perch on my table or my knee when I am writing out of doors. Last year a pair of blackbirds brought up two broods of four in the fork of a laurel, and showed no fear when I paid them a visit of inspection.

MORTIMER COLLINS.

In April, Mortimer Collins wrote as follows :—

Spring at last. Why, we shall be having the swallow soon. Verily, it is hard to believe, after the long, keen winter through which we have passed. It has been often said—I know not by whom said first—that we enjoy autumn most in our youth and spring in our age, The reason is reasonable enough, namely, that as you grow older the melancholy of autumn grows more oppressive. I must have been born old. I always loved spring, of its promise of the royal summer. It is the herald of the king of the year. Its violets fearless of snow, and wind-blown daffodils which gave Wordsworth his only knowledge of odour, and celandine that shines with glossy gold at the elm-tree root, are the banners of the vanguard. Trumpet of thrush and blackbird, fife of robin and wren, prepare us for the cuckoo, untirable bugler, and for the divine chorus of nightingales that will sing King Summer to sleep behind the crimson curtains of sunset. Yes; I have always liked Spring: and this year I like it all the

more, because that rebel winter has been so hard to kill.

In the *Loiterer* of April 8th, Mortimer Collins mentions his old friend John Ormsby.

How pleasant it is to come across a book by an old friend whom you have not seen for many a year. Such a pleasure I have just had in reading *Stray Papers*, by John Ormsby (Smith, Elder, and Co.). He was irreverently known as Jack Ormsby in the days when we explored the suburban beauty of London, a gay set of Bohemians, and dined together afterwards at the "Cheshire Cheese," fighting over politics, literature, and salad-mixing in the maddest manner. Well, the years have passed, Jack—I beg pardon, John—Ormsby's hand has not lost its skill. The keen, observant eye, the pleasant sub-acid humour, the easy, unconscious style akin to Thackeray's, but with less mannerism, go together to produce a charming book of essays.

Knowl Hill,
April 24, 1876.

DEAR CAMPKIN,—If you look into Saturday's *Spectator*, you will see some rhyme of mine, *The Gräfin von Rosenau*. The fiendish printer has printed "disposed" for "deposed" in v. 3, l. 4—thus spoiling the best

line of the lot. I wrote them for the *World*, and saw them in proof: but Edmund Yates thought them too strong or too weak, and did not use them. So some of my Easter visitors proposed the *Spectator*, and one of them copied the verses, as I thought my fist would not be welcome in Wellington Street, so there they are, misprinted.

In haste,

M. AND F. C.

On Easter Monday, Mortimer Collins wrote as follows:—

Easter Monday. The Queen's (or Empress's) stag-hounds meet at Maidenhead Thicket. A procession of sight-seers pass the lawn on which I loiter. Wonderful are the various vehicles. All the ramshackle shandry-dans in the Home Counties convey all the queerest-looking people you ever saw to the neighbourhood of the "Coach and Horses." Mr. Mason's supply of ale and spirituous liquors will run short to-day. Well, the scene is picturesque no doubt, but I have seen hounds meet in a workmanlike way too often to care for this annual cockneyism. Moreover, I don't think much of following a tame deer across country.

At this moment there are four poets (one major and three minor) and a lady novelist in the room, all chattering and laughing at once. If, therefore, my

loiterings are slightly discontinuous, I throw myself on the mercy of the considerate reader. We must all take holiday. Let us take it *sadly*, as Froissart said was the habit of Englishmen in the fourteenth century. By the way, how often that passage is misquoted to show that we English are dull, stolid fellows! Are we? "Sad" in the fourteenth century meant *steadfast?*

The next letter to Mr. Campkin, the librarian of the Reform Club, was written on the 28th of April. Mortimer Collins mentions not wearing a dress-coat at the Mansion House. He seldom dined out during the last eight years of his life, and when he did he always asked to be allowed to wear his velvet coat. The Lady Mayoress had on this occasion given him permission to do so.

The novel alluded to was the "Village Comedy," written by Mortimer Collins and his Secretary.

Knowl Hill,
Dies Veneris.

MY DEAR CAMPKIN,—I shall be glad to see your Committee Report. I suppose your library grows fast. I should very well like to be a librarian with carte-

blanche as to book-buying: still more, however, would your lay-preachership arride me. Verily I would attempt to deserve your too-friendly eulogy, and would not spare the paradox.

If you pine for a taste of "Flora and the country green," why not put yourself outside the London and Oxford Coach at Hatchett's (10 a.m.) and be dropped at the gate of Poet's Cottage at 1.30? We mean to make Carleton Blyth, Quadrigarius, bring down our friends free. But come not to morrow week, for we are going to stay with the Lord Mayor and dine with the Literati. I, coming up from my hermitage into the brilliant assembly, expect to be painfully reminded of Jerrold's reply to the minor man of letters who said, "We both row in the same boat." . . . "Ay, but not with the same skulls." However, I mean to enjoy myself, and not to wear a dress coat! We are going to St. Paul's on Sunday in state (Cæcilius in a straw hat), and there is to be a clerical luncheon afterwards. Here's dissipation for an aged poetaster, as an amiable critic called me years ago. You know the illustrious Hoby, your opposite neighbour. The Reform Club near Hoby's is, I am told, a frequent address. The Missus at Easter ordered a couple of pair of shoes for me there, but I hear nothing of them.

Will you drop in and tell him that one Mortimer Collins wants his shoes? Perhaps if you could induce your resplendent and genial hall porter to go across, the effect would be finer still.

[*Seriously, would you mind looking in at Hoby's, and reminding them about Mortimer's shoes?*

F. C.]

Do look at the second page of this week's *Pictorial World*, the Missus's new novel is advertised there. Can't you imagine how proud she is?

We are truly sorry to hear such bad news of your son. Milton's resolve to

. . . Argue not
Against Heaven's hand or will
Nor bate a jot
Of heart or hope——

is the only thing for such troubles.

My wife sends her love. We hope to call when in town.

ἀεί (more Greek),

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

Mr. Campkin objected to Mortimer's use of Greek in his writings.

The allusion to the illness of Mr. Campkin's only son recalls a sad coincidence to my mind. He died of heart disease (after rheumatic fever) at the hour that Mortimer was buried, while Mr. Campkin was standing by Mortimer's open

grave; Mortimer also having died of heart disease, which was supposed to have arisen from rheumatic fever.

In the *Loiterer* of April 29th, Mortimer Collins writes thus of Lord Lyttelton, whom he had known by correspondence:—

The sad death of Lord Lyttelton will be greatly felt. All the world that knows anything knew him as a fine scholar and a man of public spirit, which is a different thing from party spirit. I knew him by correspondence merely of rather a controversial kind, as a very courteous gentleman. I cannot help thinking that a man of his intellect might have been saved from perishing of melancholy. I know of my own knowledge what an accountable depression is. The very absence of care will sometimes produce it. The most delicate and sensitive intellects are likeliest to suffer from it. When it grows chronic, the sufferer wants something more than a "personal attendant," specially instructed not to let him have a razor. He wants change and cheer, and the intercourse of friends. What says Hermann Boerhaave (*Aphorismi de Cognoscendis et Curandis Morbis*) under the article "Melancholia"? *Motus, exercitia, equitationes, navigationes,* of course. Let the man who grows weary of existence because he sees no fresh achievement be urged to change his sphere of action,

to break beyond his groove. Had I been Lord Lyttelton, and felt unutterably weary of life, I would have chartered a yacht to the epic isles of Greece, and followed Odysseus in his wanderings, and sought for a Cyclops to evade or a Circe to defy.

"A Fight with Fortune," 3 vols. [Hurst and Blackett], was published in April.

The book is not by any means a work of art as a novel; it was written hurriedly, week by week, for a newspaper. Nevertheless it is amusing, and full of pretty thoughts. Mortimer Collins again tries here, as in his previous work, "Blacksmith and Scholar," to show that it is possible to unite manual labour with refinement and education. In this case his hero is a glazier [but of good blood], who educates himself.

The book is dedicated to W. J. R. Cotton, M.P., who was then Lord Mayor.

I will quote a few sentences where the author gives us some of his own opinions.

Talking of his hero being a poet (most of his heroes are poets), he says,—

Most young men do write verse, and fancy them-

selves poets; and why shouldn't they? It amuses them, and doesn't hurt the public so long as they don't publish their productions. But whether we are scholars or only plumbers and glaziers, or bakers or candlestick-makers, we can all put a little poetry into life if we please. A man may be a poet without being able to write verse. There may be a poem in a picture, or in the arrangement of a few flowers, or in the building of a church or a house, even in the putting in of a pane of glass. The whole creation itself is to the poetic mind one grand long poem, of which a fresh piece can be read every day.

Amongst the books in Charles Cotton's bedroom was one entitled "The Genuine Works of Charles Cotton, Esq.," its date was 1715. A quaint book, with illustrations even quainter than the letter-press; but our young plumber and glazier was proud of it. He could see it was not the highest form of poetry. He tingled all through to produce something poetic, if only it were a poetic hose for a pump, or a poetic pane of glass.

He was at the age of inchoate ideas. We all pass through that stage, all of us who are worth anything; and then we pass a few years in wondering at our own folly, and then we begin. Experience has taught us, and the world has to listen when we speak.

In the next paragraph I quote, Mortimer Collins so completely shows his own character.

Great agglomerations of men lead to splendid results; famous towns are famous things. Yet how many, "in populous city pent," must pine for closer intercourse with nature! I always deem there is deep significance in the myth of the giant Antæus, who fought with the demi-god Hercules. When Hercules could lift him from the ground he was too much for him. When Antæus again touched his Mother Earth, he got new vigour. Does not Hercules symbolize the antagonist destiny, against which every man of us has to strive? Are we not freshened for the unequal fight when, like Antæus, we seek the bosom of our generous mother, and drink the wine of winds, and cool our wearied eyes with the emerald woods, and suffer the laughing river to rock our cradle of a boat?

The lovingness of all wild creatures is delightful to the man who has to live in an atmosphere of suspicion. The robin perches on my knee or my table as I scribble on the lawn; the nightingale sings, close to my open window, a happy serenade; it is hard to believe that flowers and trees do not recognize those who love them.

> "And 'tis my faith, that every flower
> Enjoys the air it breathes,"

says Wordsworth, and I am very much of the same faith.

In the next paragraph the author is again on his favourite subject of the true lady.

He was true knight and troubadour. To him a lady was a divinity. Such men are rather rare in these days of the Divorce Court and the breach of promise action; but they still exist. To put it tersely, there are a few gentlemen who believe in the existence of ladies. That such should be the case is a remarkable fact. The loud woman, the fast woman, the scientific woman have done their utmost to abolish the lady. Ah, but without success. She lives still, in happy corners of England where progress is unknown, and where she grows, a joyous radiant flower, unspoiled by algebraic or ecclesiastic watering-pot.

And here again is the author on a favourite subject:—

It is a matter to be remarked that the ethereal tincture of the soul is the same all through. A tailor or a cobbler who does his work well is on the same level as a general or statesman who does his work well. And here were three men, an Italian marquis, an English gardener, an English glazier who got on well from the first. "What condescension in the marquis!" says Boots de Boots, whose great-grandfather was a waiter at Boodle's. I don't see it. I honour a good

English workman as much as I honour a true English gentleman. Both are perfect in their kind. They are convertible. Cannot a gentleman be a workman, or a workman a gentleman?

In the next paragraph I quote, the author speaks rather severely of curates. He had great respect for the clerical office, as he has shown by his writings, and numbered several of the clergy amongst his friends—men for whom he had a high respect. And if in his later works, especially his last work, "The Village Comedy," he has painted a clergyman in rather strong colours, it was from no want of reverence for his profession. He says,—

I think girls should learn Latin, if only to read Cicero De Amicitia. One of the weak points in modern life is the decay of real friendship. It is perishing among men, and seems to have altogether perished among women. It is a flower of life worth careful culture; and I rejoice to say that I have a few friends (a very few) who would do for me what I would do for them, even though life were on the risk. And among them are ladies! A note of ejaculation is needed. Can a lady, thinks the ordinary dolt, be a

perfect friend to a man without what your Old Bailey barrister would call "ulterior purposes"? I trow not. It must be Platonic love, or love warmer than the Platonic. Dear reader, seest thou the result hereof? It shuts women out from the friendship of men; shunts them—reduces them to converse with nobody save curates and lady's maids. The dull folk in an agricultural parish, if they see a lady walking with a gentleman, instantly whisper something wrong; the parson, if he is a young fool, brought into the world to disestablish the Church, picks up this faintly whispered gossip; after which that lady's life becomes a misery to her. Of course her relations get frightened, and it is always your nearest and dearest who say the falsest things about you. As the wittiest Canon of St. Paul's remarked, the most dangerous animal to let loose among women is a wild curate.

That Mortimer Collins really appreciated a good clergyman will be shown by the following sentence, written about the same time as the last paragraph I quoted:—

Could we but sketch, with the pen of true genius, the model Rector of an English parish, what a grand picture he would be on the canvas. Vandyke should paint him. The man who, with a clear view of the

high central truth, has a deep sympathy with humanity in its worse troubles; who turns undazzled from the Great White Throne and carries its light into wretched hovels and into the minds of wretched men; who strives to interpret the thought of God by the work of what we call nature; who deems no science useless, no creature soulless—that is the true parson. He, the *persona ecclesiæ* (*vide* Blackstone), through whom sounds the Voice of the Church, should exhaust the knowledge of the world as a mere contribution to the infinite science of Theology. When we have such a Clerisy as that, we need fear no disestablishment.

In the next paragraph the author gives his experience of life in a village.

Your villager, especially in the South and West of England, decides entirely on the quality of a neighbour by the company he keeps. If a man has not time to exchange morning calls with county people, or if he cannot stand the annoyance of their sadly insipid conversation, they quarrel with him, and will talk scandal about him horribly, and go so far as to say that he poisoned his washerwoman to avoid paying her bill. Luckily Lord Lieutenants, Deputy Lieutenants, High Sheriffs, and other dignitaries of the sort, were made for calling purposes; so, gentle reader, if you take a house in a country place, and don't want

to be tabooed as a pariah, hire your dignitary! A good dinner will do it, especially if you bring from town a friend from White's or Brooks's who dwells within the pale of exclusive society, and who will, like Theodore Hook, know a man in the country whom he couldn't possibly know in London. After that you are safe. The county recognizes you at the recommendation of a chief magnate, and you will be at once free to all dinner-parties, balls, garden-parties that the minor magnates give. I don't envy you, *mon ami*. Those pleasures pall; I would rather, like Charles Fox, sit with my back to a haystack on a summer afternoon, reading the "Prometheus Bound" of Æschylus, and watching the blackbirds eat my cherries.

In the next sentence he writes the idea which he continually made every one about him feel.

Who would not be a child again? Well, we shall all be children again some day in God's great nursery of the invisible world.

And in the next he tells us what he thinks about money.

Ah, you see what the world is! "Money makes the

mare to go," saith an adage of antiquity unfathomable; and what saith a certain noble Roman, much quoted by Parliamentary gentlemen who keep private secretaries with a smattering of the classics?—

"Scilicet uxorem cum dote, fidemque et amicos,
Et genus, et formam, regina pecunia donat."

Yes, Queen Money, to use the Venusian's strong phrase, can do many things! She can give you a wife opulent, also unlimited credit, troops of friends, good blood (certified by the Heralds' College), and a magnificent personal appearance. Horace, however, being wise in his generation, did not say she could give you health, or happiness, or wit, or wisdom, or the love of a true woman. Queen Money is omnipotent within her own limits—the boundary of an aureate Alsatia, where every one must bow down and worship the fiend-god Mammon. Never does the poet, never the philosopher, never the gentleman enter there. There is no idyl or lyric in the precinct dedicated to the modern metallic Trinity—£. *s.* *d.* How often have I seen a brilliant young fellow drawn into the City whirlpool and losing all his youthful poetry, and becoming merely a money-making machine, with a taste for idiotic ostentation! It is very painful. Perchance the greatest of the sayings of Christ is, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." The moment money

becomes the chief idea in a man's mind, chivalry and poetry and religion perish out of him.

And in the last quotation I make from "A Fight with Fortune," the loving fellow expresses what his friends know well that he felt.

Somebody to love – lawfully, you know, of course— is what few men or women can do without. I should feel a very poor creature if there were not a pleasant group of friends (of both sexes, mind you, for I believe in female friendships) who would not be loyal to me as I to them. But the One to love! That is the light of life.

Early in May Mortimer Collins and his Secretary made a visit to the Mansion House, and remained with the Lord Mayor some days. The Lord Mayor's dinner to literary men took place on the first day of the visit. At this dinner Mortimer Collins met, for the first time, Robert Browning, whom he considered to be the greatest living poet.

"We sympathize on Greek subjects," said the poet.

"Yes," said Mortimer, "but we often differ."

"Never mind the difference," said the poet, "it is the *in*difference I object to."

Mortimer used afterwards to tell with great pride how Robert Browning had for years read his weekly article in the *Press and St. James's Chronicle*, called "Adversaria."

After dinner Mortimer met Mr. Swinburne in the billiard-room, and both men got into an excited conversation on Greek poets.

"Euripides was a cad, sir," Mr. Swinburne was saying with great warmth as the Secretary went into the room with the Lady Mayoress.

The Greek poets appeared to be such a fascinating subject that the Lady Mayoress presently remarked, "If some one does not separate those gentlemen, they will talk Greek poets all night."

Mortimer Collins was at this time apparently in his usual health and spirits, and only those who knew him know how buoyant his spirits were. He was like a great happy school-boy out for a holiday. Although he did not go to

bed till two o'clock on the night of the literary dinner, he was up in the morning and out at seven to see, as he said, "what the City looked like early on Sunday morning." At half-past seven in the morning he stood on London Bridge, the only human being there.

He has given some little account of his visit to the Mansion House in the *Loiterer*, which I will quote. He says, writing from his bedroom in the Mansion House,—

I write this *Loiterer* somewhat after midnight in the centre, the very core of London. The mighty heart of the world's greatest City is lying still. I suppose the guardsmen who take charge of the Bank of England, whose roof I see from my bedroom window, have finished dinner. I came up to town by Mr. Carleton Blyth's coach from my Berkshire hut on Saturday, to attend that literary dinner which Lord Mayor Cotton made so pleasant a success. Mr. Blyth drove as well as usual—and where's the man who can drive better?—and, but for an east wind that blew dust into one's eyes and a near-wheeler in the last stage that would canter, the drive was delightful. There were great men among the banqueters. Robert Browning was there. I shook that honoured hand for

the first time. The sweet singer of Atalanta was there, and Locker the Horatian, and Froude the historic, and Houghton the patron poet. A female novelist or two enlivened the assemblage. Mr. Sala made the speech of the evening. That was Saturday. At what time the greatest poet of the day (or night) left the billiard-room and went home to ponder dithyrambics I know not. Next morning the Lord Mayor was at the church of St. Andrew Undershaft in state, that church having recently been restored, and this the opening day. I do not admire the restoration altogether; and the change of the fine old stained window, with portraits of Edward VI., Elizabeth, James I., Charles I., and Charles II., from the east to the west, I consider a mistake. Canon Barry preached a very good sermon, though rather in the wrong groove. Theology does not apologize for being at issue with science; it includes science. The forward-pushing clergy of the present day are too apt to substitute eloquence for knowledge. Canon Barry does not quite see that there is more science in the first chapter of Genesis than in all Huxley and Tyndall and Darwin.

Monday morning, and the 77th Regiment, which Picton commanded at Waterloo, are at the door of the Mansion House with their tattered colours, to be placed in St. Paul's over Noble's famous monument to the officers and men (nearly 600) who died in the

Crimean campaign. Colonel Kent, on a charger that has been twice to India, once to Australia, and that Colonel Stratton rode through the Crimean war, presented the colours to the Lord Mayor. That royal rag! The mad whirl of many battles has worn it to threads, and now in the calm cathedral of London it will slowly drop to dust. War and peace are friends. If the gallant 77th had not been willing to die for the realm, there would be no Lord Mayor of London, no calm cathedral of St. Paul. When Colonel Kent and the Lord Mayor had exchanged speeches (excellent good on both sides), the regiment marched to St. Paul's, and the colours were solemnly presented. The Dean, receiving them, laid them on the altar of God; then, after fit ceremony, they were placed above the monument to those brave brothers of ours who died for England. Never have I been more impressed by any solemnity. When I saw those torn flags of many victories placed upon the shrine of everlasting peace, I wished to be young again, that I might choose another vocation, and use the sword rather than the pen in defence of religion and loyalty.

Friends of Mortimer Collins, who met him at the Mansion House, and saw him so full of health and spirits, found it difficult to realize that he was dead a few weeks after.

It was pleasant to see the big boyish fellow romping with the Lord Mayor's little children, playing blind man's buff, and all sorts of games. When playing battledore and shuttlecock he tossed the shuttlecocks so high in the old ball-room that they were both eventually lodged on the cornice of the walls, where they probably remained till the room was newly painted, or perhaps they are still there. Every one seemed to envy him his health and spirits at this time.

On the day that he left Knowl Hill for this visit to town, the first few chapters of "The Village Comedy" were published in the *Pictorial World*. The description of the village and villagers was so accurate (not being altogether complimentary to the villagers) that he expected to find all his windows broken when he returned, for there were some rough characters about. Nothing of the sort, however, happened; and the story continued to appear from week to week, causing great excitement in the neighbourhood. People could not imagine how the author knew so much about them. It did

not occur to them that a man might possess such insight as to be able to judge their whole character from some little incident.

Mortimer Collins was himself one of the characters in this story, and there is a good description of his cottage and mode of life. He had long looked forward to writing this story in a leisurely way; and had he commenced it some three years before, as he intended, he would probably have given a very different impression of his neighbours, for then good feeling prevailed in the village. But when "The Village Comedy" was commenced the whole place was full of malicious slanders; each person had something to say of his neighbours, and ill feeling prevailed.

Mortimer Collins hoped to do some good by his story, and although he only lived to write and publish half of it, it is probable that some few people learnt a lesson from it.

In the next paragraph I quote, from "Adversaria" of May 27, Mortimer Collins is happy on his favourite subject of birds

again. The emus are at Sir Gilbert East's place.

At a pleasant Berkshire mansion the other day I made the acquaintance of a pair of tame emus. They seem harmless enough, but are apparently fond of a practical joke. At first they were allowed to wander on the lawn at the entrance; but whenever the carriage drove up, and the footman jumped rapidly down to open the door, the emus at once ran after him and seized his hat. In consequence of this humorous habit, they have been confined to a turfed enclosure, where they receive human visitors with great courtesy. Last year the hen laid six eggs. These are of a mottled dark green, extremely beautiful; and the shell is so thick that one, mounted in silver, has been made into an elegant drinking-cup. As the hen is a very clean feeder, I suspect the eggs are good to eat, but the experiment has not in this case been tried. Ostrich eggs in aspic are extremely good, *experto crede;* I really cannot see why those of the emu should not be worth the epicure's attention. The other day I found a young man shooting at small birds close to the high road, and thereby breaking two Acts of Parliament at once. If, as is likely enough, he had no gun licence, he was of course breaking three. When I warned him that it was a matter for the police, he said, in a supercilious way, that he shot birds "for artistic

and scientific purposes." Verily, I thought, the schoolmaster is abroad. This youth with the gun is artist and scientist; I, knowing it not, have treated him irreverently. Juvenal's saying, *maxima debetur puero reverentia*, assumes a new meaning now that youth has grown so singularly sapient. However, as I knew where this precocious personage was to be found, I requested the Superintendent of Police (who probably will care little for his art and science) to administer a warning.

The following letter refers to the verses by Mr. Campkin which I have already given in the first volume, page 50.

The original manuscript of them was framed and hung in the entrance-hall of the cottage, and so many friends wanted copies that they were at last printed.

Knowl Hill,
Oak Apple Day, 1876.

My dear Campkin,—Do you recognize these vigorous but too flattering tristichs? So many folk have wanted a copy that we have invoked the shade of Caxton to help us. Those long Aristophanic lines are no joke to copy.

When are you coming on the roof of Blyth's coach?

The breezy journey will inspire you with a poetic post-script.

The Missus wonders whether you have looked at our story in the Pictorial. She expects a compliment, and you have not sent her one, you churl!

Ever yours,

MORTIMER COLLINS.

At the end of May Mortimer Collins wrote as follows:—

Do not you, gentle reader, of whichever sex, remember that there once was summer? Was it not warm upon Thames in the twilight—

> With indolent fingers fretting the tide,
> And an indolent arm round a darling waist?

Was it not warm under linden avenues, with the full moon vainly striving to pierce the foliage, and only adding to the magic mystery? Was not champagne-cup enjoyable at noon on the bright lawn beneath the strong serenity of Helions? Those days are past. Snow is the heritage of May. This Easter, when friends came to see me, I hung up my mistletoe, and greeted them with "A Merry Christmas." As I write by a warm fire with a glass of mulled claret at hand, I hear the east wind howling furiously outside and

driving sleet against my windows. It would be quite enjoyable weather for December: in May, and at the summer end thereof, it is rather irregular.

Early in June the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress, with the Sheriffs and others, visited Mortimer Collins at his cottage. They had been to civic banquets at Bristol, Bath, and Reading; and from Reading they travelled by Mr. Blyth's four-horse coach, stopping at the cottage on the way for half an hour, and taking tea on the lawn. It was the day before this visit that Mortimer Collins was first observed not to be as well as usual. He went into Reading in the morning to meet the Lord Mayor, and the Lord Mayor remarked how ill he looked. He drove home again to dress for the dinner to be given in the evening by the Mayor of Reading, and then went back again to Reading and then home again at night. These four journeys of eight miles each, and the hurry and excitement of the day, no doubt made him worse; and although his brain remained as active and bright as ever to within two days of his death, he never looked

well again. His face became very pale, and he lost his activity of body. He tried to fight against it, and to make those about him believe he was well; but it was evident that his strength was going. He recorded the visit of the Lord Mayor in the following way:—

Whitsuntide has been pleasant every way. The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress and their suite have, as I remarked, passed this way. It was very enjoyable when they deigned to group themselves for half an hour on my lawn. My little Berkshire village was amazed. I suppose it does the small folk good to see the advent of the great folk; but to me small folk and great folk are very much alike. If, dear public, "Adversaria" is short, please forgive me. Would you this Whitsuntide weather, with charming ladies lounging on the lawn, with red chestnut and medlar in bloom, with my dogs imploring me to take a walk across the meadows to Medmenham by the Thames, expect me to work very hard? The flintiest of editors would not require such service.

The measure, arrangement, and rhyming of a sonnet are often subjects of argument amongst verse-writers. Mortimer Collins has more than

once stated in print what is his idea of the true sonnet. But in writing sonnets he did not always hold to the true way. He would write it in various ways. In *Punch* of June 17 there are three sonnets forming a poem called "Sonnets for the Sex," and all differently constructed. They seem to be defiantly done, as if the writer would show that he need not be bound by rules, since he could write so easily any way.

I think I may quote the last of these sonnets, not only because it is interesting, being written so shortly before his death, but because in one line,

> "The easy strength that makes a joke of toil,"

Mortimer Collins writes what he felt himself. All who knew him felt that he had indeed that "easy strength."

> Well, just another sonnet, Ladies fair:
> *Punch* loves to see your exquisite soft ways,
> To watch you in the summer's happy haze,
> To braid poetic roses in your hair.
> Only, he says to younger men, "Beware!"

The old philosopher whose length of days
Would veteran Methusaleh amaze,
Laughs at these boyish wooers void of care.
Ladies prefer brain and backbone and power,
The easy strength that makes a joke of toil,
The hand that masters either sword or pen:
So youngsters eager for a glorious hour,
Learn that the rapier's stronger than the foil,
Love Ladyhood, and live the life of men.

The next I quote from "Adversaria" of July 1. Christopher North was always a favourite with Mortimer Collins.

A few days before Mortimer's death, his Secretary was generously presented by Mr. Blackwood with all Professor Wilson's works, and Mortimer Collins was reading delightedly all through the "Noctes" once more.

Windermere! That lake, as I knew it in my boyhood, comes back to me when I open a charming volume just issued by Blackwood, "The Comedy of the Noctes Ambrosianæ." To the poet-professor, Tory of Tories, I owe more than to any other man as to early education. *Blackwood's Magazine* taught me more than I learnt from all the books, classical, mathematical, philosophical, which it was my painful duty to

read. That magnificent entity, Christopher North, was to me a personal friend, the great teacher of the time; and when some thirty years ago I was foolish enough to publish a poem on Windermere, to him it was dedicated.

I have noticed that the present generation of critics cannot endure the "Noctes." I am not surprised. The Professor was too Homeric for the men of the day. He ate and drank like a Greek hero, and amusingly exaggerated his prowess in that way. We are quieter now. Sir Wilfrid Lawson's grave reprehensive glance terrifies us into an intense sobriety. It is much better, of course. A man like Wilson would have been much out of place at a time when stock-jobbing is the fashionable occupation, and hypocrisy the fashionable virtue.

Mortimer Collins always used quill pens, which he cut himself. He was exceedingly methodical in all his writing arrangements. He used to say that he cut his pen according to his subject. He always sealed his letters.

He gives us his own ideas on such matters in a little article in *Punch* of 8th July, just three weeks before his death, which he called "Mr. Oldfangle's Opinions."

Nothing can equal the grey goose-quill. You must cut it yourself with blade of keenest steel, and suit it to what you are about to write. A canzonet to a lady requires quite a different pen from a cartel to an enemy. How can the unvarying steel or gold be adapted to the ever-varying themes on which letters have to be written? Cut a pen to write a letter to your stock-broker, ordering him to sell Turks; would the same pen do to write to a lady a pleasant nonsensical reminder of a Richmond dinner? The thing is absurd. I am an old boy, sir, but I would not desecrate a letter to a friend or a lady by using the same pen which I used for business until its foul fringe were cast off from it.

"And you always seal your letters, Mr. Oldfangle?"

Always; the seal is older than the signature. My crest and motto are older than my name. There was *Sans Dieu Rien* upon my coat-of-arms before ancestor of mine could do more than make his mark. And consider this—when you seal a letter, the great recollection of your forefathers is brought before you in leisurely fashion. Is what you have written worthy of the crest and motto just fixed on the red wax? If not, for the honour of your ancestry tear up the epistle and think again. Sealing-wax, sir, is a great check to epistolary rashness. I hate this hasty age of adhesive envelopes and steel pens.

The following is a fragment of a letter to Miss Louisa C., written about a month before Mortimer Collins's death. He took great pride in the row of tall lime-trees in his garden, as may be seen from the continual allusion to them in his works. His landlord one morning meeting him at the gate, asked if he would mind having the limes cut, as they would interfere with the hay-carts coming from a neighbouring field.

For some time before his death any excitement made him turn pale, and he came into the house full of anger, and looking very white, at the mere idea of cutting his cherished limes.

Imagine old Wainwright's coming to ask to have my limes cut where they overhang the lane, because they are inconvenient for the hay-carts next door! Can you imagine my wrath?

It is curious that there is a reference to the Homeric hymn we were talking about in a chapter of the Comedy that appears to-morrow. . . . .

Learning rhyme by rote is the accomplishment of a parrot. No real lover of poetry remembers it well. He has his own special passages, which he cannot

forget. They light up the emerald stretch of a great poem like

"Daffodils
Which come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty."

Frances slowly improves, and we go over to Hall Place to lunch.

I have to wear a pair of socks of unequal sizes; Frances says because the knitter of them never learnt geometry.

MORTIMER AND FRANCES.

The last paragraph that I shall quote from Mortimer Collins's works is from "Adversaria." He had written the article under this heading in the *Press and St. James's Chronicle* regularly for many years. On this occasion he is speaking of the waste of literary power in periodical writing. He says,—

I confess when I look through the file of "Adversaria," I think what a *magnum opus* it ought to be. But I chance to know that a few of my words in this desultory column have been read with pleasure by men of genius, aspirant young folk. So I plod quietly along this

winding, shady, flower-fenced lane of literature, leaving lofty charioteers to drive their four-in-hand on the high road of fame.

The last of the nonsense verses for "Knowl Hill Rhymes" were written about the beginning of July, to Mr. Edward Draper, in answer to some addressed to Mortimer Collins by him. That they may be understood I must also give Mr. Draper's lines, and these require some explanation.

His little son was staying at Henley with some relations, and the father came down to see how he was, and get some fishing. He brought the boy over to the Cottage at Knowl Hill one afternoon. For the rest Mr. Draper's lines will tell the tale. The boy is called familiarly Old-úrbic. The thirtieth line refers to a pair of dumb-bells which amused the child.

ADÁRD AND EVANNAH.

* * * * *

Thus spoke Adárd, while on the table lay
In silver glory o'er a dish of delf,
Three pike, once tyrants of the weedy deeps:

"These, loved Evannah, are my gifts to thee;
I caught——." Evannah push'd his gifts aside,
And standing high and massive as a rock
That bounds the coast of Cesaræa's *isle*,
Cried, "Bother fishing! Tell me of Old-úrbic."
Old-úrbic was the name they gave their boy,
A brown-hair'd, brown-eyed boy of eight years young.
"Thine offspring," said Adárd, "is safe and well,
And bread and butter from his trencher glides
Like clouds that flit across an autumn sky.
But yesternoon I led him to the Hill
Whereon resides the giant Mertimor,
Where lawns, deep-slopen, linden-bower'd, lead
Southward in front towards the British sea,
Which, like a fairy lakelet, mirrors France
And other continental villages.
"Thence on the east is seen the castled mount
Of Dover. Westward the domain is bounded
By Tintagel; and, looking to the north,
By misty heights of rugged Caledon,
Where kilted Scotsmen fly the antler'd deer,
And the fierce salmo-salar swallows towns.
"Thither I led Old-úrbic. When he view'd
The Giant and the Lady of the House,
Before whose feet ferocious pigeons bend,
Old-úrbic said, 'Father, I'm glad I came.'
Then, spying in a corner iron disks
Covered with hides, the spoils of many bulls,

And weighing tons, he flung them up to heaven,
Where they evanish'd, far from mortal ken.
And then he shouted in the antic phrase
He learn'd in early babyhood, 'Hic est
Alauda hilaris'—'Here's a jolly lark!'
And with his merry laughter cleft the sky.
The Giant smiled, and gave him dry champagne
And bread and butter, flesh of savage lambs,
And sausage stuff'd by Brunswick's warriors grim,
All the which pleased Old-úrbic mightily.
And then the Lady, and the Giant, too,
Begg'd he might dwell with them for fourteen days
(Though economic prudence might suggest
To keep him but a week were better far)."
Then spoke Evannah: "Errant husband mine,
I wish Old-úrbic back once more to kiss him
Ere he again depart. Let him with thee
Return when next thou makest holiday,
And after take him to the Giant's Hill."
(The which, translated from the feminine
Into the masculine and coarser tongue,
Stands thus: "Best let him rough it where he is
Till he kick out his old and well-worn clothes,
And after take him with you to the Hill
In all the splendour of a brand new suit.")
She ceased. Delighted spheres attuned their pipes
To symphonize assent and hymn her praise.

EDWD. DRAPER.

Mortimer replied to this in the same mock-heroic style; but the reply was sent in the name of the "Giantess." The thirty-third and following lines refer to the visit of the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs to the Cottage, and what was actually the fact, that the "Giantess," intending to make a new cotton gown to receive the visitors, had not time to "put the stitches in." In the forty-second line there is a pun on the name of the gentleman who drove the coach, Mr. Carleton Blyth.

The Giantess who dwelleth by the Hill
To Adárd sends greeting: Lo, the sheets are air'd,
The bread and butter cut—no bread and scrape
Such as the tender urchin gets at school,
But new white manchet thick with creamy curd:
Also the dry champagne is eager still
To burst its bonds and cool Old-úrbic's lips;
And if there be to him some drink more dear,
As toast and water, or as senna tea,
Delicious beverage of babyhood,
It shall be deftly mingled. Keep not back
The hilarious hope of thy right famous house
To be in awkward new apparel dress'd,
Cut by sartorial swell's abhorrèd shears.

Fain would he roll upon the lawn, but pride
Forbids new breeches to be stain'd with green:
Fain would he play at leap-frog with his host,
Surmounting Atlanteän shoulders. Ah!
What woe if newest jacket came to grief!
Avaunt the fell idea! Let him come
In boyhood's oldest, well-accustomed suit,
With trouser-pocket where the knife and top,
The luscious bull's-eye and the favourite taw,
Long time have dwelt in happy partnership.

Thus farther saith the Giantess: Old clothes
Are our Titanic trimmings. Mertimór
Hath worn one suit since first he was full-grown.
His coat is like the schoolboy's famous knife,
Which, blade and handle many times replaced,
Was still the same. Sometimes the husk must go,
Sometimes the lining—but 'tis still the same,
That, when the savages, portentous crew,
Invented their great instrument, the Club,
He wore resplendent. And the Giantess,
Expecting from great London's Hall of Guild
Magog magnificent, the Lord thereof,
Not without Gog, and sworded Shire Reeves strong,
And lovely ladies of the Civic Court,
Did for herself a cotton gown devise,
To indicate her calm humility,
But had not time to put the stitches in

Ere at the gate arrived the lordly coach,
Pull'd sharply up by blithest charioteer,
And thence descending, all the stately throng
Spread in a painted pageant on the lawn,
Like peacocks in the radiant summer sun.

Wherefore the Giantess desires to see
Old-úrbic in no spick and span costume
As from a band-box stepping daintily,
The envy and disdain of ruder boys:
But rather in attire to boyhood dear,
Before conceit is born within the brain,
Before the healthy orchard-robbing taste
Has given way to a pert priggishness,
Which in our young Old-úrbic scarce can grow,
Or he would not be his dear father's son.

"Old-úrbic" came on the 8th and left on the 22nd of July, just six days before Mortimer's death; so that he was the last visitor who stayed at the Cottage. His father came to fetch him away, and as he left the gate he bade him turn round and look once more at the place, and keep in his mind always that he had stayed with Mortimer Collins.

CHAPTER VII.

MORTIMER COLLINS AS A HUSBAND.

THERE is one point in Mortimer Collins's character which should be noticed, but on which it is difficult to comment. At his death it was remarked in one of the papers that in his domestic relations he was a model of constancy and kindness. He was even more than that. His relations with his wife were absolutely perfect. She was his friend and hourly companion. After the first month or two of their marriage the two were never separated for twelve hours, and were scarcely ever an hour apart. They worked and thought together. This fact is just mentioned because it must ecessarily go some way in making an estimate of Mortimer Collins's cha-

racter. The constant companionship of a woman must have great effect in developing a man's character; and the constant companionship of a man must be of great benefit to a woman. They improve one another.

There is another reason why some little mention should be made of Mortimer Collins's love for his wife: it will give an opportunity of quoting some of the verses written to her. So far as the subject is concerned, they cannot of course interest the general public; but, putting aside by whom or to whom they were written, they are models of love verse, and should therefore be given to the public, though they were never intended for publication.

They are not laboured productions, but were generally thrown off in a few minutes as the thought came.

The first quoted was written to F. C. in 1874, and has been already published in the *Athenæum*.

Oh, touch that rosebud! it will bloom,
My lady fair!

A passionate red in dim green gloom,
A joy, a splendour, a perfume
That sleeps in air.

You touch'd my heart; it gave a thrill
Just like a rose
That opens at a lady's will;
Its bloom is always yours until
You bid it close.

Mortimer Collins used always to write verses to his wife on certain days in the year, such as her birthday, Valentine's Day, New Year's Day, April Fools' Day, &c., and post them at the village post-office. He disguised his handwriting that his wife might be puzzled when the letter arrived; and with boyish delight he would watch her open it.

The following were written on her birthday in 1875. The writer tries to imagine that he knew of her birth the moment she was born. The blank in the second line can be filled by any name with two syllables accented on the first.

Ah, where was I, that happy day
My pretty —— came this way?
Surely the careless wandering boy
Felt in his heart a thrill of joy,
Saw in the sky a brighter gleam,
Had, as he stroll'd, a mystic dream
Of the fair child of wit and whim
That very moment born for him.
I don't know where, I don't know how,
But I will swear that I
Recorded a true marriage-vow,
In that July.

She came into the world for me:
I wonder if the summer sea
Whisper'd of her an amorous tale—
Or if the dulcet nightingale
Utter'd through the woods a word
Of the cooing little bird,
Just flown down from spheres divine,
To be mine, yes, always mine.
I care not how, I care not who,
Brought tidings from the sky,
But I will swear my bride I knew
In that July.

I knew her, yes, no matter how,
Even as I know her now—

A goddess with two loving eyes,
A baby that was born too wise.

* * * * *

A lady who, in happiest mood,
Could teach the world of Ladyhood,
Since now she came to earth's green coast,
Among the months shall I
Revere the most (and kiss her most
Therein) July.

Then, as if the writer were overflowing with verse and could not stop, he breaks out into this pretty little epigrammatic postscript :—

P.S.—I often think, my only love,
The world would be more true,
If half the ladies in the world
Were half as good as you.

And don't you think, my only love,
'Twere merrier 'neath the sky,
If half the men in half the world
Could love as well as I ?

The next is a sonnet written on Valentine's Day, 1874, and is an acrostic on the name Frances Collins. It was written at a time when a lawsuit was giving trouble.

FRANCES, my darling, Valentine is here:
  Radiant and royal comes the laughing spring,
  And everywhere the birds are carolling,
New nests are building, skies grow calm and clear,
Crocus and violet hail the growing cheer,
  Earth gladdens to be rid of winter's sting.
  Sweetheart and wife, my loving little thing,
Come gladden also with the happy year.
Oh, had I but the power, as now the will,
  Life to make always pleasant to my own,
  Leading her through green gardens of delight!
I, happy now, should then be happier still,
  Nor envy poet crown'd, or king on throne,
  Since my sweet kingdom is her bosom white.

The next were written to Frances Collins on the 1st of April, 1876.

Now if to be an April Fool
  Is to delight in the song of the thrush,
To long for the swallow in air's blue hollow,
  And the nightingale's riotous music-gush,
And to paint a vision of Cities Elysian
  Out away in the sunset-flush—
Then I grasp my flagon and swear thereby,
We are April Fools, my Love and I.

And if to be an April Fool
  Is to feel contempt for iron and gold,

For the shallow fame at which most men aim—
And to turn from worldlings cruel and cold
To God in His splendour, loving and tender,
And to bask in His presence manifold—
Then by all the stars in His infinite sky,
We are April Fools, my Love and I.

The next were written on the 20th February, 1875. The weather was very bad, and Mortimer, who liked being out of doors as much as possible, had been unable to go out all day. These lines were just thrown off in the ten minutes before dinner. They have been published since Mortimer's death in the *Athenæum*.

Fast falls the snow, O lady mine,
Sprinkling the lawn with crystals fine,
But by the gods we won't repine
While we're together,
We'll chat and rhyme, and kiss and dine,
Defying weather.

So stir the fire and pour the wine,
And let those sea-green eyes divine
Pour their love-madness into mine:
I don't care whether
'Tis snow or sun or rain or shine
If we're together.

The following sonnet, also published in the *Athenæum* since Mortimer's death, was written to Frances Collins in 1873:—

Women there are who say the world is slow
To recognize their scientific power;
Wherefore they fill with heat the flying hour,
And let the beauty of their sweet life go
Like water thro' a child's frail fingers. So
Might the tree murmur not to be a tower,
Might envy of the strong storm vex the shower
That wakes sweet blossoms and makes brooklets flow.
The lady whom I love has no such thought;
No stolid strength of mind shall make her weak,
No folly sink her in the sad abyss
Where these same scientific souls are caught.
She knows a kiss befits a lovely cheek,
Ay, and that rosy lips were made to kiss.

The next were written to Frances Collins on her birthday, in 1869.

This is my B——'s birthday:
This is the day when she,
Under the sky of bright July
Came into the world for me.
She came in the time of roses,
The time when the sweet birds sing;

To her belong both odour and song—
The beautiful loving thing.

Ah! why is there any trouble
For her, among roses born?
The rarest rose that in summer grows
Has oft the sharpest thorn.
And the eyes that are loving and lovely
Are often fill'd with tears;
And the tenderest heart feels most the smart
Of the dull world's saddening years.

But what could I do without her
In this dull world, alone?
Her soft white breast is my pillow of rest
When the cares of the day are flown.
Her beautiful daring spirit
Keeps my weary heart awake,
And my poet's pen shall cónquer men
For my darling B——'s sake.

The next lines were written to Frances Collins on her birthday in 1874. The lawsuit which had been a source of great trouble to Mortimer Collins and his wife, was now just concluded. Coggia's comet was visible in 1874.

Now what shall I say to my beauty?
Her birthday's already begun—
As I rhyme, both for pleasure and duty,
'Tis close upon one.

I'll say, she is sweeter than roses,
She sings like the rarest of birds,
And I love, when with me she reposes,
Her dear loving words.

She's the truest and happiest lover
Of song-bird and blossom and leaf;
And I hope now the way to discover
To save her from grief.

We'll banish all care, and pass from it
Into regions of quieter life,
Since we walk'd beneath Coggia's comet,
My dear little wife.

I must win in the end, it is certain,
Whatever the critics' ill-will,
But we'll draw the green-foliaged curtain
Round quiet Knowl Hill.

Just a plunge now and then, for the picture
And drama, in London's abyss:
But you'll hear my unvarying stricture,
There's nothing like this.

Ah, we'll have happy moments, and clutch them
'Neath many a soft summer sky,
And the roses will bloom as you touch them
—So, darling, shall I.

Mortimer Collins has written much in his books on the subject of marriage, and as he did not write from imagination merely, what he has to say is perhaps of some value. Whatever his faults were, as a husband he was perfect. He and his wife were as thoroughly friends and companions as a couple of people of the same sex could be; and yet he never dropped into the rough familiarity which such companionship was likely to engender, but was to the last a chivalrous and courteous lover. I feel that I am awkward in my praise of him in this respect, and that anything I can say will give no adequate notion of this noble point in his character. I should like to quote a couple of sentences which show, better than anything I can say, how perfect were his ideas on marriage; and, as I said before, he did not write from imagination.

In his chapter on the "Marriage of Completion," in the "Secret of Long Life," he says,—

The ladies who raise a clamour for certain political and social privileges never hitherto allowed to women are so pertinacious and vociferous that we are sometimes misled into imagining them far more important and influential than they truly are. The great mass of gentlewomen look upon the movement with indifference or contempt, aware that woman's highest destiny is to marry—to be merged in her husband, and complete his character.

* * * * * *

The best of us will find that he has something to learn from his wife . . . . that there are subtler faculties in her nature enabling her to guide him in circumstances whereby he is himself perplexed.

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy:"

and there are also more depths in a woman's nature than any modern philosopher will fathom. The man who has nothing to learn from his wife is simply a stolid blockhead, who will never learn anything from anybody.

Concerning the marriage of completion, these things may be affirmed. The man, becoming a husband,

becomes simultaneously a creator and a father; he creates a new soul in his wife; he exerts over her paternal authority and protection. Similarly the woman, on entering wifehood, is at once a mother and a teacher; she begins immediately to nurse, and foster, and educate. The terms husband and wife contain within themselves all other expressions of relationship; including these, they include much more than these. It is impossible to do more than indicate this fertile theorem, which will yield infinite significance to those who study it carefully. I merely repeat that in the supreme relation between two human beings all other relations are involved. Hence the marriage of completion completes not only the characters and destinies of the two persons concerned, but likewise all their conceivable functions. Comedies and novels are laughed at for ending with marriage, but the artist's unconscious instinct is true. To marry aright is to read the riddle of the world.

Before quoting the other paragraph, I should like to give one verse from the second canto of the "Inn of Strange Meetings," as yet unpublished. The scene of the poem is in Hades.

In Hades there's a sterling law of nature:
The poet who has a wife (a wife that's true,

And no mere product of the Legislature)
Finds that his very soul she travels through.
She hears him think, and coins his thoughts anew—
She is one with him: and when the great procession
Of thought is with him—royal retinue,
She has an equal purchase and possession,
She knows his inmost soul, and needs no word-confession.

The next paragraph is from Mortimer Collins's novel, "Frances." The words are put into the mouth of Gabriel Shirley, one of those quaint poetic characters which Mortimer so loved to describe.

"A true wife has three functions to fulfil. She is your mother, teaching you many things, punishing you when you deserve it, nursing you in all your troubles. She is your daughter, learning from you, obeying you, receiving help and comfort from you. She is your very self, sharing your glory and grief, your triumph and trouble . . . . being, in fact, not a part of you, but your inborn, inseparable self. The miserable failures of married life are caused by men and women who cannot understand these things."

"Are they so hard to understand?" asked Hugh Roland.

"Yes," replied Gabriel Shirley, "thanks to the invincible conceit of people who want the universe made their own way. God made it admirably, to my mind, and he ordained marriage as the noblest outcome of the race. Ask me what I think the finest thing to be seen, and I say, *Man and wife.* Carry out my theory, Hugh. Be your own wife's father; teach her all you know; treat her with paternal kindness and discipline. But be also your wife's son; accept thankfully her teaching and guidance. And, above all, become one with her; give and take; learn to regard her as yourself, and yourself as her. That is marriage. It makes two one. It makes man woman, and woman man . . . . or, rather, makes of the twain that which is sexless and perfect. Man and wife—true man and wife—are one; if one dies, the other is dead also. Their union is too intimate to admit of division. Their spirits will mingle elsewhere, but the survivor on this planet is a mere lay figure or residuum."

CHAPTER VIII.

GENERAL REMARKS.

I HAVE, so far as I can, made Mortimer Collins speak for himself, and have quoted such of his writings and letters as show what were his tastes and opinions and mode of life, and who were his friends. There are many who will understand the man and sympathize with him, but there are many to whom he will seem incomprehensible; and some to whom he may perhaps appear ridiculous. There are people who cannot realize that so much strength and simplicity as were seen in Mortimer Collins can be united. They only understand *laborious strength*, and not *easy strength*. On the other hand, there are those who recognize in that same mixture of strength and simplicity an ideal nobility.

A man with every power of mind and body so highly developed was likely to have great faults, greater faults than a smaller man could find room for, as was remarked of some one else; but his faults were faults of the body rather than of the mind, and they were never concealed, either from his friends or his readers.

There is little more that I need say of him. The reader has, no doubt, made his estimate of his character by this time; but there are a few little points concerning him which might interest those who admire his writings.

The "Comedy of Dreams," which he used so freely for mottoes to his chapters, was an unwritten drama he had in his mind. Just before his death his Secretary was about to collect all the mottoes, that he might piece them together and form the drama. It is in the iambic trimetre, and is, I believe, the only original English verse in that metre. The scraps of this drama that have been published have attracted the attention of a few deep-thinking scholars, but they are "*caviare* to the general."

Some of the best of these scraps were written within eight days of the poet's death as mottoes for his novel, "The Village Comedy." The mottoes generally to his chapters were nearly always his own, though, like Sir Walter Scott, he often pretended to have found them from an old play or a sixteenth-century manuscript.

Verse-writing was so easy to him that he was prodigal with his verse, and not only wrote his letters in verse, but when he was cutting a new quill he would take up an odd bit of paper and write verse just to try his pen. His Secretary used to find many epigrams lying about that had been made just to try a pen. He took no care himself in preserving what he wrote.

He had a theory that mathematics and poetry were allied, and commenced a work on "Rythmic Algebra," but abandoned it because he was advised that the public would not be sufficiently interested in the subject to make the work pay, and he could not afford to work without payment.

I imagine there are few people who have no-

ticed the immense variety Mortimer Collins shows in his choice of metres. He would write a dozen Valentines or New Year's verses in an afternoon, and take pride in making each of a different metre; and he seemed even to suit the metre to the character of the person he was addressing.

All those elegant bits of "chaff," his letters in verse, only a small proportion of which have been given in this book, no doubt gave a great deal of pleasure to those to whom they were written. One which I have not given commences,—

DEAR CHARLIE,— Horace to his friends
Wrote pleasant letters long ago:
He cheer'd and chaff'd them, and the self-same ends
Are mine, as well you know.

So far as worldly matters were concerned it would seem to be Mortimer Collins himself that needed the cheering, as he had to make a continual struggle for a living, and had to suffer many disappointments and vexations. But he

had that happy disposition which money will not buy, and could give a great deal more pleasure to those about him than many a rich man can; and so he "cheered and chaffed" every one, whatever happened to himself.

He described this point in his character, a few days before his death, in the last chapter he ever wrote of "The Village Comedy." "Jack's friends," alluded to in the following sentence, were Mortimer Collins and his wife, who were characters in the story.

A man must be interpenetrated with dulness and depression like a sponge with water to resist the infectious gaiety of pleasant, unaffected folk like Jack's friends. They were people who took seriously enough the serious side of life, but who were not so drearily stupid as to neglect its humorous side. It was their belief that difficulties were made to be overcome, and that the contest against them should be resolute, yet mirthful; and without that belief the condition of a man of letters in England must be a melancholy failure. For, while England enjoys some of the highest culture in the world, in no country are so few books bought in proportion to material wealth; in no country are the servants of literature less honoured—unless indeed

they are opulent amateurs, or happen to become the fashion. Men hear Mr. Ruskin prophesying in the wilderness and maintaining that it is a fraud to read a book unless you buy it; then, with a smile at such impracticable opinions, they send to Mudie's for their light reading. Artists flourish: for your wife's portrait by Millais, or a rood of canvas covered with quasi-Greek figures by Leighton or Poynter, is a clear sign that you possess the chief of modern virtues—an ample balance at your banker's. But "writing fellows," as the leading literary journal of London calls those without whom it could not exist, require indomitable courage to make their way against the close-packed phalanx of astute publishers and malignant critics, and abundant humour to cheer their "uneasy steps over the burning waste."

The tone of this paragraph has just a suspicion of dissatisfaction in it—only a suspicion—but when we remember that a few days after those lines were penned the writer died of rupture of the heart, caused by excessive mental strain, we can only wonder that he did not complain more. When we remember this, and look again at that paragraph, it speaks volumes.

It is the cry of agony of a strong man who was

fighting his way through all sorts of difficulties, and yet was determined never to despair or break down. And his spirit never did break: 'twas only his heart.

Mortimer Collins was always pleased when he found intelligent people in the lower classes to talk to; and he was delighted if they appreciated his writings. Sometimes he received letters from people of this sort; people unknown to him, who wrote to say how they admired his works. I possess various bits of paper inscribed with very indifferent spelling, and with an indiscriminate use of capitals and stops, which were much cherished by Mortimer. One which I have received since his death I think I may quote, as it shows what impressions Mortimer made by his writings. It is from a shoemaker in Norfolk, of whom I had never before heard. He says,—

I see in the *Pictorial World* the Death of Your husband—Which I feel that I have lost a Friend and a Good Man.

I have read the letter called the *Loiterer*, and have

been so Gladened and Pleased with his good Genius. I am sure he was a very Good Man, therefore I hope the "Village Comedy" is comepleted, and that the remaining Parts which have not been Publish will continue to be Printed. And allso all his other works will be published. As then, If Pleased God, I and my family may have the Pleasure of reading them, and receive instruction thereby. Dear Lady I feel for you as I know your Lost is great and cannot be replaced.

The same man, writing again, says,—

I wish that myself could say or do something to cheer you up under your great lost. I knew that he must be a good Husband, as by his writeings he could shew to me and to all others who read his works and writings that he was a generous and Largehearted and Good Man. I thought his sayings and his writings so much like our Saviour's, that I and My Wife and family allways welcome the *Pictorial World* newspaper which contained some of His Letters called the *Loiterer* and the "Villadge Comedy." His wise saying and good Advice and instruction Highly enlightened us, and gave us Courage to work at our trade in a honest and straightforward way, and so forth. In conclusion I hope you will cheer up and make yourself happy, while Liveing he Your Husband Loved you, and i feel that if he could spake, He would say to you, be happy, be comfortable the same as you used to be.

CHAPTER IX.

DEATH.

ALTHOUGH Mortimer Collins had the appearance of perfect health and strength, he seems to have suffered from hereditary weakness of the heart, and this weakness was, no doubt, increased during an attack of rheumatic fever that he had in the winter of 1869-70. But he showed no signs of it till about six months before his death, and then not such signs as to cause any anxiety.

He first began to look ill in the early part of June. His face was very pale, and he did not seem to have his usual power of body; but his brain was as clear as ever.

He began to complain a little of his work pressing on him, and wished he could go to the

seaside and have a short holiday. But there were no serious symptoms till about ten days before his death, and then he began to suffer from difficulty of breathing, and could not lie down, and therefore could not get sleep. Just at this time Mr. Blackwood had made him a present of all Professor Wilson's works, and he used to spend the greater part of the night in reading the "Noctes Ambrosianæ." He was always so appreciative of other men's works, and he remarked over and over again how glad he was to have such pleasant reading while he was ill. He was very patient under suffering, and he sat patiently night after night reading the "Noctes," because he could not sleep. He seemed glad to be in the air as much as possible while he had such difficulty in breathing, and the moment there was daylight in those July mornings he would go and sit by the open window of his bedroom and read. The picture of him as he sat at that window night after night, or rather morning after morning, is for ever fixed in my mind. A

wistaria grew all round the window; it was just showing its second blooms, and he enjoyed the scent of it so much. The wistaria seemed to form a framework round him as he sat there. He looked very pale, but seemed to have a brighter look than ever on his face, and his intellect seemed clearer than ever.

On Thursday, the 20th, he wrote to his friend and doctor, Byron Blewitt, telling him he fancied he was in a rapid consumption, and begging him to come to see him as soon as he could, and not let me know how seriously ill he was.

Mr. Blewitt did not arrive till Sunday, the 23rd. He saw what was really the matter, but thought it wise not to say what it was then, and recommended that Mortimer Collins should stop work at once and go away for a change.

Mortimer's son-in-law, Keningale Cook, had sent an invitation for him to stay with him at Richmond; and as that would place him within convenient reach of his doctor, it was arranged he should go there. He continued to work till

Tuesday, though he had been unable to take any food but milk from the Saturday.

It was arranged that he should travel by road to Richmond, as a railway journey always irritated him, even when he was well.

On Wednesday morning he looked very white and weak, but he was still as brilliant as ever. I felt anxious about leaving him alone while I was packing, so I ran into the book-room every few minutes to see that he was going on well. I found him with a favourite robin in the room, a young one, who had made his acquaintance early in the summer. There is something inexpressibly touching in seeing a splendid big fellow like Mortimer Collins on terms of such familiarity with a little robin.

During the morning our great friend Miss Louisa C. came in to say "Good-bye" to us before we left. She remarked how very handsome Mortimer looked; he seemed to have an almost unearthly brightness on his face. This was the last time she saw him.

We reached Richmond at six o'clock on Wed-

nesday afternoon, Mortimer being very much worse for his journey; but he revived a little later in the evening. We were sitting in a room which looked over a large reach of the river. The sun had set behind some trees on one side of the river, leaving a beautiful soft glow over everything, and the moon was coming up on the other side. The red sunlight gradually died away from the water, and the pale moonlight became reflected there. Mortimer lay on the sofa enjoying all this intensely. He looked exceedingly handsome on that evening. The whole scene made a picture not to be forgotten by those who saw it.

About nine o'clock Mr. Blewitt came, and then I learnt the terrible truth. He promised the next day to bring Dr. Daldy or Dr. Herbert Davies, who were special doctors for heart disease.

Mortimer slept better than usual on Wednesday night, and was happy and cheerful as usual when he woke up at six o'clock; but about seven he began to sink, and from that time he gradually got worse. His mind occasionally wan-

dered during the day, but it was always on his work.

In the afternoon Dr. Daldy and Mr. Blewitt came. They gave him some medicine, and came again in the evening to see what effect it had. Then they gave him champagne, which he refused. I reminded him that it was his friend Mr. Draper's fiftieth birthday, that he was giving a party to celebrate it, and that he would be pleased to think we remembered him by drinking his health.

"Of course I'll drink his health, the dear old boy," said Mortimer, and he drank the champagne. The medicine and champagne brought some of the old brilliancy back, and Mortimer sat up in bed and talked metaphysics with the doctor, and "chaffed" him in his usual pleasant way.

The doctor remarked to him that he was humorous, and said no one would think, to hear him, that he had been so near death a few hours before.

"Is it not right to be humorous?" asked

Mortimer. Dr. Daldy seemed to think, under the circumstances, it was doubtful.

But Mortimer said seriously and bravely, "If I have been humorous, shall I not be humorous to the last?"

He never rallied again after this. His good friend, Mr. Blewitt, remained with him during the night, but he passed a very bad night. He was unable to sleep or lie still from the difficulty of breathing, and his mind wandered occasionally.

On Friday morning he was quieter, and seemed better able to lie still; but every now and then he started up, and said he must do his work. He kept fancying it was Thursday, which was the day for certain articles to be written, and always a very busy day with him. A little after one o'clock, in the middle of the day, as he was lying back on the pillow quietly, apparently asleep, only breathing heavily, he suddenly stopped breathing. There was no different sound in his last breath—he stopped quite suddenly.

A post-mortem examination showed that he had ruptured the right auricle of the heart.

He died on Friday, the 28th of July, 1876, and was buried on the following Tuesday in Petersham churchyard. His coffin was covered with a white pall, surmounted by a large wreath of white flowers, and there was a general absence of black amongst those who attended the funeral, as Mortimer objected to black being worn on such occasions.

Mortimer Collins had just completed his forty-ninth year when he died, but he gave the idea of being a much younger man. He was boyish, and did not seem to be wearing out, but rather to be developing his powers.

In a collection of his poems there are some pretty verses on death addressed to me, of which I quote three verses.

No: I shall pass into the Morning Land
As now from sleep into the life of morn;
Live the new life of the new world, unshorn
Of the swift brain, the executing hand;
See the dense darkness suddenly withdrawn,
As when Orion's sightless eyes discern'd the dawn.

I shall behold it: I shall see the utter
Glory of sunrise heretofore unseen,
Freshening the woodland ways with brighter green,
And calling into life all wings that flutter,
All throats of music and all eyes of light,
And driving o'er the verge the intolerable night.

O virgin world! O marvellous far days!
No more with dreams of grief doth love grow bitter,
Nor trouble dim the lustre wont to glitter
In happy eyes. Decay alone decays:
A moment—death's dull sleep is o'er; and we
Drink the immortal morning air Earine.

To have him taken away so suddenly, in all the strength of his manhood and intellect, was a terrible trial to those who loved him; but there is some pleasure now in thinking that he was taken when at his very best,

. . . Unshorn
Of the swift brain, the executing hand.

It is curious that he makes so many of the characters in his books die of heart disease. He often used to say that he thought it was the

pleasantest kind of death, as it saved one's friends the trouble of a lingering illness; but he had no idea that his heart was affected in any way.

His mother died in 1873 of weakness of the heart.

He opens his book, the "Secret of Long Life," with the following paragraph:—

Length of life wholly depends upon ideas. This Aphorism has a double significance. There are men who live longer in a day than others in a year: for their brain is thronged with thoughts, as the halls of an emperor's palace are thronged with knights and ladies, with courtiers and minstrels and guards. There is never dulness in the stately edifice, even when night comes, and the festival is over, the nightingales sing in the pleasaunce, and the rivulets murmur a soft under song. All the hours are full of life and thought. He who lives thus, though he die in youth, has a far longer span of existence than the peasant churl who ploughs and delves, eats and sleeps, unconscious of an idea; even than the lucky aristocrat, who has nothing to do save enjoy life, and who frequently finds himself extremely bored. And often it happens that the intense energy of a great thinker wears out his spirit's tenement, that he dies young, having left his work half

fulfilled. But he has lived long for all that; he needs no pity from those who deem it the acme of good fortune to pass a torpid century on this earth's surface.

This especially applies to Mortimer. He lived every moment of his life, and doubtless his "intense energy," as he so well expresses it, wore out his spirit's tenement.

The pretty cottage at Knowl Hill is deserted. The poetic spirit of the place is gone. The beautiful big dog, who loved his master so much, is dead.

There are many of us who loved Mortimer so intensely that his loss is a terrible agony to us, and yet his influence over us all was such that we feel we should never show signs of mourning, or grief, or sadness. We always speak cheerfully concerning him, for he made us all feel that death was not a thing to be feared. We do not regret that we can no longer have the times with him that he made all too pleasant, but we are grateful that we have had so much pleasure.

I will say no more, but will finish my work with the words of a friend.

"My acquaintance with Mortimer Collins began through the 'Inn of Strange Meetings,' that poem which seems to embody in an original form the favourite idea of so many deep thinkers that the Spirit of Man not only is to be, but always has been immortal. I remember being struck with the very clear and concise way in which he argued the question, showing that marvellous command of the English language which is such a striking feature in his writings. My admiration of his literary genius fast ripened into warm personal friendship when I came to know the varied powers he possessed, and that while using his pen with untiring vigour he was able to keep his heart and mind free, elevated and joyous, and undebased by the drudgery of a journalist's work. He not only wrote poetry, but he made life a poem, and rejoiced if he was ever able to lead others to do the same. I should think no man ever worked harder in the profession of literature than he did, and yet he never seemed bored by it, or allowed others to share the

weariness and anxiety which he must often have suffered. I cannot help dwelling upon this, because it was such a striking feature in his character, springing as it did from that deep religion in his soul, which made him feel that life was full of God, and therefore an unjoyous spirit was unworthy of true manliness. Mortimer Collins was seen to the greatest advantage in the quiet of his country home, where it was my privilege often to visit him, and I never left him without bringing away some fresh pleasant thoughts and information on a variety of subjects—every object around, from the blade of grass at his feet, to the pigeons that soared above his head, seemed to give him food for thought. And how quickly and intuitively he would discriminate, and how clearly express, in a few forcible words, the right and wrong of any subject. He rejoiced in diffusing gladness. He made one feel that to make a heaven of earth, man has only to love not merely his wife and family, but all living things. How often must he have been irritated

by the clumsy remarks and narrow views of those with whom he conversed, and yet he was the most patient listener, curbing his knowledge till the right moment, and then by a pithy remark letting in the light. It was easy enough to be bright and intellectual in his presence.

"With respect to his novels, there can be no doubt that they are a reflex of his mind, and in many instances, pictures of himself, and a fair representation of what he wished to be and would have been, had he possessed the means. This stamps them with an individuality so interesting to all who knew him, and makes them really rather psychological studies than stories. When healthy novels again come into fashion, readers will turn with grateful pleasure to some of Mortimer Collins's books, and find in them that refreshing, buoyant spirit which makes them stand out in striking contrast to some of the laboured productions of the present day.

"I have not nearly exhausted all I would like

to say of one to whom I owe so much—one who exemplified the truth that 'to breathe is not to live,' and at the same time proved that it was not necessary to seek for much change and excitement, but that the seeing eye and the hearing ear would find material for thought in the meanest things around one. What has been said of Michael Angelo applies in every respect to Mortimer Collins. 'He was intensely gentle and tender, peculiarly sensitive to kindness. Beneath the deep lines of power and passion which seamed his face there gleamed an expression of infinite tenderness such as his life did not belie. Spirits at once so tender and strong fare ill in this rough world, and are only known when they have passed beyond its praise and blame and their hearts are stilled to its tumult.'"

THE END.

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